Meggy MacIntosh

A HIGHLAND GIRL IN THE CAROLINA COLONY

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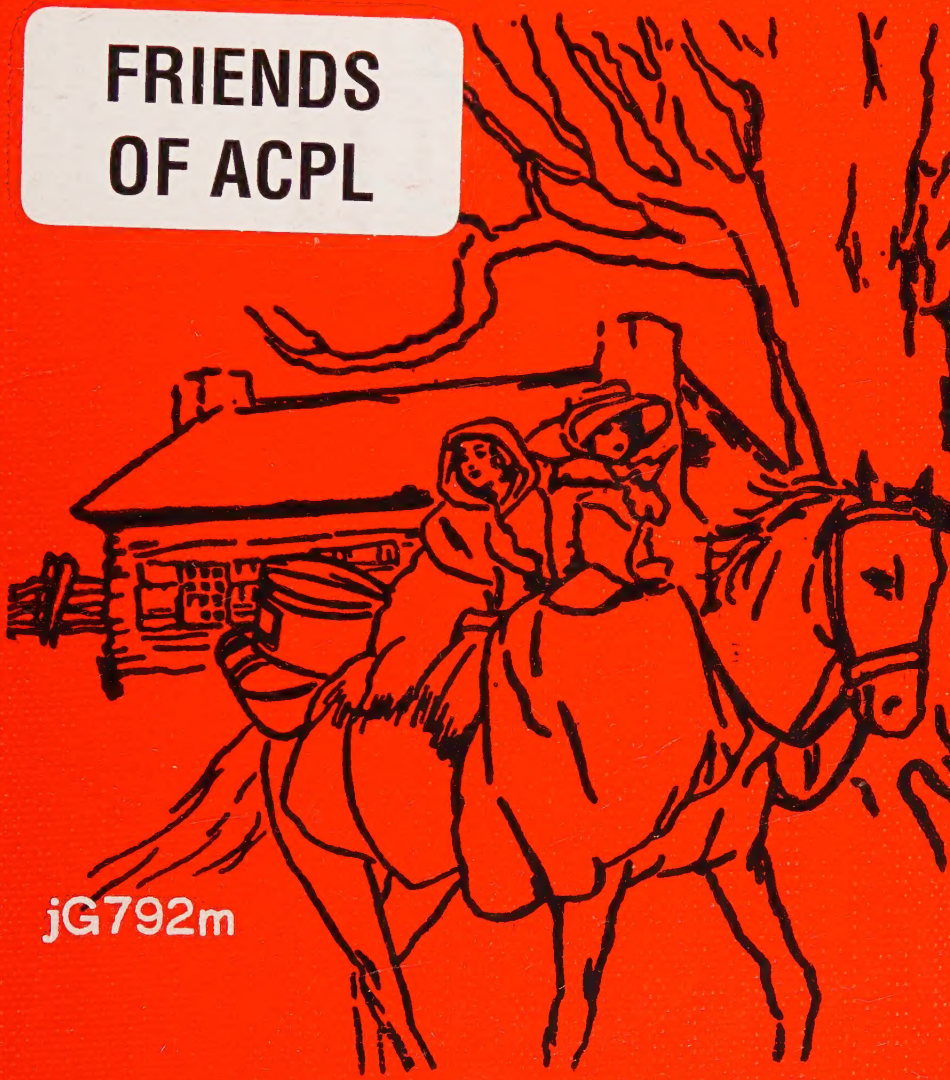

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BEPPY MARLOWE

THE FAIR ADVENTURE

YOUNG WALTER SCOTT

TILLY-TOD

MEREDITHS' ANN

Meggy smoothed the green folds of her habit. "I feel," she said, a little unsteadily, "like Columbus."

Meggy MacIntosh

BY ELIZABETH JANET GRAY

Illustrated by

MARGUERITE DE ANGELI

JF G792m

New York

The Viking Press

1944

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PUBLISHED BY THE VIKING PRESS IN OCTOBER 1944
PUBLISHED IN CANADA
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LIMITED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

C249229

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

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Meggy MacIntosh

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH MEGGY WRITES AN ESSAY

EDINBURGH, January 5, 1775. It is Melancholy," wrote Meggy MacIntosh, "to be fifteen and poor and homely in close proximity to a cousin who is eighteen and rich and beautiful."

A wealth of tradition and romance is the heritage of every Scots lass, no matter how destitute her sire. Meggy had, besides, what were still referred to as the MacIntosh jewels, although that once fine collection had dwindled to a pair of rubies and a flawed emerald. Traditions and the tag end of the family jewels: these were all that her father had been able to leave her; unless you count—and Meggy didn't—the MacIntosh courage and clear-sightedness.

She had grown up in a shabby, draughty little castle away in the north, a quiet, motherless little girl, fishing in the burn with the grieve's two lads, listening to her father's long tales of the spirit and the strife that were Scotland's history. Her father, "Black Allan" MacIntosh, had given the best of his life and fortune to the cause of Prince Charlie, back in '46. Ill health, political disgrace, and poverty had been his reward. When he

died, four years before, the little castle had gone by the laws of inheritance to a distant cousin who did not want it, and Meggy had been sent to Edinburgh to her aunt and uncle, who did not—particularly—want her.

The Keiths, Sir Douglas and Lady Keith and their daughter Veronica, lived in the Cannongate in one of the tall lands (or apartment houses) that for centuries past had housed the great folk of the city and were only just beginning to be deserted for the more spacious and elegant mansions that folk were building in the New Town across the Nor' Loch. In 1775 there was still a sprinkling of wealth and fashion in the high gray buildings that rose into the gray sky out of the steep and narrow streets, the wynds and closes of the Old Town. Each family occupied a floor, and the middle storeys, neither too high nor too low, were the fashionable ones. The Keiths lived upon the sixth storey, in the very heart of the land, guarded by the Gordons (a most distinguished family) above, and the MacNeills (less well-to-do but still of undisputed lineage) below. Their rooms were large and elegant, but there were none too many of them. In fact, there were so few that beds had been built into the wall in the vast kitchen to accommodate chance visitors or storm-stayed travelers. When Meggy came to stay there had been a little flurry over the question of where she was to sleep. The logical solution soon appeared, however, and a bed was set up for her in Veronica's room. Shortly thereafter a tutor

was found for her, an ancient Highland minister who needed help; after some clothes that Veronica could no longer wear had been bestowed upon her, Sir Douglas and Lady Keith, who were preoccupied with other things, considered their duty done. And Meggy, missing her father and the freedom of the little cold castle more and more with every day that passed, did her duty as she saw it by her aunt and uncle; she never caused them any trouble, and as far as she could she kept out of their sight altogether.

It was on a gloomy afternoon in January that, all the Keiths being absent in search of pleasure in one form or another, Meggy sat down at the secretary in the big empty drawing room to write an essay for her tutor on the Application of the Principles of Moral Philosophy to the Experiences of Daily Life. She did not hesitate for an Application.

"It is Melancholy," wrote Meggy rapidly, "to be fifteen and poor and homely in close proximity to a cousin who is eighteen and rich and beautiful."

She stopped to look at the words she had inscribed in clear black letters upon her page, and searched her mind for more words to add to them. None came. It was Melancholy, and that was all there was to it. Rising from the spindle-legged chair, she went to the window and looked out.

There was nothing to be seen to-day through the mist but the gray lands opposite across the narrow Cannon-

gate. On clear days between two of the tall buildings was a narrow vista of the towering rock called Arthur's seat and away to the south the snow-covered Pentland Hills. To-day the haar, like a white wall, closed her view, and shut her in; it made her feel more than ever alone and unimportant.

Meggy could look facts in the face. The calamity of being fifteen she would outgrow; there was discomfort but not disgrace in poverty when it came as a result of a gallant father's devotion to a bonny prince; but being homely was insurmountable. Meggy was small for her fifteen years; small and too thin. She had straight sandy hair of the fine kind that flies and blows; she had a slender nose a shade too long and of the wrong shape—it turned up flagrantly and unexpectedly at the tip—an amusing nose, an original nose, but not a beautiful nose; she had a wide mouth, set with even white teeth, but too big. Her best points—oh, Meggy had studied herself point by point in the little mirror over Veronica's dressing table—were her complexion and her eyes. Her skin was white and transparent, touched at the cheeks with faint rose; her eyes were deep-set, blue-gray like faraway hills, but they were direct and keen, not veiled and mysterious and changeable like Veronica's.

To Meggy, her cousin Veronica was the loveliest and the gayest young person in all of Edinburgh. If Sir Douglas and Lady Keith forgot for weeks at a time that Meggy existed, Veronica never did. Coming in late from

the assemblies and the parties to which, now that she was a grown-up young lady, she went nightly, she was never too tired to sit on the edge of her bed and tell Meggy about the dinners and the dancing, the funny things that happened, the conquests she made among the beaux.

If only Veronica had not been away so much of the time! During the long days there was nobody for lonely Meggy to talk to. The servants, who were Lowland bodies, showed plainly that they considered her uninteresting in appearance and unimportant in estate. So she studied and she read and she dreamed—lived over the days of '45 when Black Allan MacIntosh, young and darkly handsome, had fought and won at Prestonpans, fought and lost at Culloden, when Flora MacDonald, young and fair, had helped a prince escape over soldier-ridden moors and a storm-swept sea—and every day she went to study moral philosophy and Latin and a strangely Gaelic French with the old Highland minister who was her tutor.

At first Mr. MacPherson had come to her, arriving in the mornings before the household was astir, and had stayed his prescribed hour and gone away again, easing his stiff knees down the turnpike stairs which were steep and—so said Sir Douglas—"dark as the Earl of Hell's waistcoat"; but during the last two years his rheumatism had grown so much worse that Meggy had gone to him at his lodgings. She liked the walk every day up the Cannongate, along the High Street, past the

Guard House where the old Highlanders who formed the town guard sometimes talked to her of battles and the hills, through the Krames, where in spite of her fifteen years the little dark booths of toys still fascinated her, into the Lawnmarket to St. James's Court, which was built upon a hill so steep that the houses were three storeys high on one side and twelve on the other. It is possible that Sir Douglas, who four years before had started Meggy's education upon its present lines—and forgotten it—might not have cared to have his niece walking alone through the city streets to see her tutor, but except at intervals when he paid the modest bills that almost sustained the old Highlander he never thought of Meggy, and he saw her so rarely that he would scarcely have recognized her had he met her face to face upon the High Street.

Mr. MacPherson was truly a companion and friend to Meggy. When they had finished the lessons they would talk of Scotland's past and of the Highlands; of Flora MacDonald, whom Mr. MacPherson had known in Uist when she was young. "She played the Gaelic songs upon the spinnet," he would say, "and she sang like a laverock."

He had taught some of the old airs and words to Meggy, and when there was no one in the drawing room she would open the spinnet and sing softly, imagining herself Flora MacDonald and beautiful, singing for a bonny prince.

Meggy turned away from the window and folded her paper slowly. Upstairs in the flat overhead there was a rushing and a thudding, which stopped almost before it had begun—the Gordon twins, no doubt, in and out again, off to a bicker with the rowdy lads of the Cowgate. A rat rustled in the wall and bits of plaster rattled and fell inside. From the kitchen came the heavy voice of the cook berating the water caddie. Meggy was sorry for the bent little man who carried all their water supply up the turnpike stairs in a wooden keg upon his back and who could not help its sometimes slopping over.

Mr. MacPherson had told her not to come to him this morning; he was to be busy with a man from Argyleshire. He had said nothing about the afternoon; the man would hardly keep him all day. There was no harm, thought Meggy, in walking around to see. It would be more cheerful out of doors.

She took her wraps from the awmry in the passage, a cast-off cloak of Veronica's and a wide blue beaver hat that tied beneath her chin. Veronica used to have the most beguiling way of peeping around the brim of this same blue hat; it was a little too big for Meggy. She set it squarely athwart her sandy head, fastened the buttons of her cloak, took her essay in her hand and let herself quietly out at the front door. All of the apartments in a land opened on the common turnpike stair where laird and lady, servant and fishwife and water caddie stumbled alike in the darkness. The lowest

storeys were leased to sedan chairmen and kailwives; going higher, one progressed through lawyers' clerks and merchants to such families of honor and position as the MacNeills, the Keiths, and the Gordons; climbing still higher one began to descend the social scale with dowager ladies, lawyers' clerks again, and dancing masters, to plumb the social depths at last with the very poor in the attics. And one flight of dim steps, lighted at rare intervals by little windows high in the wall, served as a thoroughfare for all the heterogeneous inhabitants of the house—a lively place, those steps, and one which only those with a firm conviction of their own rung in the ladder of life could traverse with any degree of decorum.

Meggy knew these old steps down to the last worn stone on the threshold five flights below, and she started briskly down through the dusk ready to do battle for her right to the railing with any save the ladies of the MacNeill, Keith, and Gordon families. Halfway down she heard steps behind her, the springy, quick steps of a gay-hearted person. Meggy slowed up and half turned, a broad smile spreading over her face.

"Veronica, by all that's lucky!" exclaimed a warm eager voice, and then, as the light from a narrow-grated window caught her face, the voice changed. "No, by Jove, it's Meggy. It's not Veronica at all, in Veronica's hat. It's 'mild, meek, mansuet Merg'rit.'"

He always had for her some tag from an old ballad

or half-forgotten song—Scots poetry abounds in Meggys and Maggies and Marg'rets—and it was part of the joke that she should be, or seem to be, most indignant at their application.

"I may be homely," she retorted, "but let me tell you this: I'm not meek and"—warningly—"I'm not—always—mild. Remember that," and she added, seeking some of his own coin in which to pay him, "'*my yellow-haired laddie.*'"

"Quits, Meggy, quits! If you're going toward Parliament Square I'm walking along with you."

Meggy's heart thumped. This was an unusual bit of good fortune. Chance encounters with Ewan, which took place chiefly on the stairs or in the entrance hall when he came to see Veronica, were generally stimulating but very brief.

The setting sun broke through the haar as they started down the street together; it turned all the gray city to amethyst, brought out the ochres and purples in the stones of the houses, deepened the green of hemlocks in an ancient garden. Ewan was in the highest of spirits and plum-colored satin breeches. Lace ruffles were at his wrists, showing their edges below his great-coat sleeves, a fine new hat upon his golden hair, Veronica always on his lips.

"D'you think she is smitten with anybody now, Meggy? Last week she could talk about no one but Murray Southerland—that donkey!—but now that

he's dancing attendance on the three Miss Grants of Rothiemurchus she hasn't a good word for him. I sent her a verse yesterday," he rattled on, guiding Meggy out of the way of a gilded sedan chair in which an elegant and abstracted lady was being borne along. "I said:

> "'Sweet rose of virtue and of gentleness,
> Delightsome lily of every lustiness,
> Richest in bounty and in beauty clear,
> And every virtue that is held most dear,
> Except only that ye are merciless.'

That ought to fetch her, eh, Meggy?"

"But you didn't make that up," protested Meggy. "That's William Dunbar!"

"Yes, I know it is—but Veronica doesn't. Unless," he added, with a touch of childish sulkiness, "unless you go and tell her."

"I'll *never* tell," promised Meggy hastily, and they both laughed.

"I'm going to see my lady Veronica this night. There's a concert at St. Cecilia's Hall, and I've found such a good fellow—sober and persistent—to distract that gimlet-eyed, sword-tongued old she-dragon—I mean, my lady your amiable aunt—while I have a word or two with Vera. I've something important to tell her."

The sun had vanished again, and the east wind, damp and snell, swept along, pushing them from behind,

eddying at corners to blow in their faces and batter Meggy's too ample hat, which had been so alluring a headpiece when it was Veronica's.

"Gardy-loo!" a voice overhead cried, and two fishwives up from Newhaven in their striped petticoats and blue coats, a sober-suited judge of the session, and a lagging schoolboy in corduroy breeks and scarlet waistcoat scattered to avoid the stream of dirty water that poured from an upstairs window.

The Tolbooth, grim and square, the noisome old jail full of the smells and the miseries of centuries past, loomed up in the center of the street, and behind it the pinnacles and spires of St. Giles. Beyond, overhead, wrapped in the mist which was gathering again, was the soaring gray bulk of the Castle. Meggy's walk with Ewan was almost over.

"When Veronica is married and out of the way," that cheerful one was saying, "then they'll have to bring you along, Meggy. They ought to be starting now. You'll need more dancing and less moral philosophy if you're to be a success with fashionable folk."

"I can play the spinnet now," returned Meggy, "and dance a Highland fling." She noted his look of vast secret amusement and realized that in the formal Edinburgh assemblies, in which a rigid etiquette prescribed every detail down to bows and handshakes, a Highland fling would be as out of place as a savage war dance. "Well, anyhow," she hurried on, "I'll never be

a success with the fashionable folk, Ewan. I'm skinny and I have a scoopy nose." She stated the damning facts calmly, though it hurt her.

"You'll never stand up with the beauty set," agreed Ewan thoughtfully, giving her for a moment his full attention, "but I shouldn't be surprised to see you doing a minuet with the witty set. You've got a keen eye like your aunt Keith's."

Which was small comfort, however it might have been intended.

They had passed under the archway into the Lawnmarket. St. James's Square on the north side was Meggy's goal. Ewan left her with a bow at the house where her tutor lodged, and went off down the street, wagging his head a little and whistling for her benefit, "My Peggy is a young thing." Meggy watched him until he disappeared. She wondered sometimes just how much of serious purpose there was beneath his gay and winning surface, but she did not see how Veronica could resist him. She sighed, and opened the thick oak door above which an inscription carved in the stone said, "Blessed be God for al his giftes—1580." Now and then it seemed to Meggy that some people got more giftes than others. She made her way down a dim passage and knocked at a narrow door hidden around a corner. A chair scraped the floor inside, she heard slow footsteps, and then the door swung wide.

He was an old man, Meggy's tutor, and so tall that

his rugged white head seemed almost lost in the shadows of the low ceiling. He wore black homespun, well brushed and mended by his own long, gnarled fingers, and at his throat were hemstitched bands of white linen which Meggy had made for him. His eyes, under ragged overhanging eyebrows, were kindly, and his voice, when he spoke, was so soft and gentle that it was almost as startling as a roar.

"Ah, Meggy lass," Mr. MacPherson said, "I wasna expectin' ye. Come in."

Peat glowing on the hearth, candles burning in brass candlesticks cast wavering reddish lights on the carved oak chest beside the door, the two stiff rush-bottomed chairs, and the square-legged table piled with books. In the shadows behind the fireplace was a wall bed, curtained with linsey-woolsey.

Meggy laid her essay on the table and forgot it the next moment as her tutor said slowly:

"Margaret lass, I have something to tell ye that I fear will mak' ye sad."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH MEGGY HEARS SOME BAD NEWS

MEGGY waited. Inside her woolen gloves her palms felt cold and wet. In some such words as these, four years ago, they had told her of her father's death.

"Meggy, Meggy, dinna look sae stricken! It's no sae bad as that! What will life do to ye, lass, if ye tak' things sae hard?—especially before they've happened. Sit down and compose yoursel', and we'll talk it over in a sensible way, and then we'll have a bite of supper and I'll walk home wi' ye."

Meggy, relaxing, drew off her gloves and laid her mantle carefully over the back of a chair. While Mr. MacPherson knelt before the hearth and blew on the peat fire, she took the spill he pointed out and lighted another candle. Whatever the catastrophe might be, it was evidently not imminent, and supper here before the fire with Mr. MacPherson was an immediate and an unexpected delight.

"They brought me a haggis," he was saying. "We'll just let it be heating by the fire while we talk."

He set the haggis in its earthenware bowl to heat, and hung a kettle on the hob for tea. Meggy stood by, feeling

a bit awkward. She wanted to help, but he was so deft and capable himself that there seemed to be nothing for her to do. But of course! She could set the table. So she moved the books to chest and floor; took from the cupboard the plates and cups and two spoons, a silver one and a horn porridge spoon, and laid them on the table.

"Ah," said Mr. MacPherson, "we'll be ready in a minute now."

He brought a high-backed chair out of the shadows to sit on, and Meggy settled down on a three-legged wooden creepie before the hearth and looked up at him. The glow of the fire lit up his large, strong features, the candlelight gleamed softly on his shaggy white hair; only his eyes, set so deep under the uneven brows, were shadowed and inscrutable. She waited for him to speak. What was it that he had to tell her?

Outside in the corridor a door opened and slammed, and a terrier gave a yelp of joy. His pattering footsteps clicked past and faded away. Somewhere overhead a spinnet tinkled for an instant. A carriage rumbled on the cobblestones beyond the windows. Mr. MacPherson roused himself and cleared his throat. Now. . . .

"Where is that essay of yours?" he said. "We must not forget our work. And when we've corrected it for logic and sound thinking, and polished up the language a wee bit, ye can just put it into the French."

The essay, after a moment's search, was found on the

chest among the books. It did not take her tutor long to read it. His lips twitched. Meggy, wreathing her hands together in her lap, realized suddenly the utter inadequacy of her effort.

"Aye," said Mr. MacPherson thoughtfully. "Aye. It's a fair example of a balanced sentence, though hardly a philosophical study. Still, it shows ye can face facts, and it shows ye can say what's on your mind in a word and ha'e done with it. Ah, well, Meggy lass, like the most of your sex ye're turning early from moral philosophy to life. The feminine mind, I've often noticed, has little fondness for the abe-stract. But ye need someone to be helping ye now, and I dinna ken wha' it's tae be." He was silent for a moment. The spiciness of the heating haggis mingled with the pungent peat smoke; the chunky black kettle sang uncertainly, stopped, gathered breath, and sang again. "We'll sup now, and then we'll talk."

He brewed the tea, brought a dish of three-cornered oat cakes from the cupboard, filled a plate with haggis, and poured a cup for Meggy. It was the most delicious meal, hot and friendly, and Meggy was hungry.

"I'm going awa', Meggy," said Mr. MacPherson heavily. "I'm going back to the Highlands."

Meggy's spoon stopped halfway to her mouth, returned slowly to her plate.

"Oh," she said uncertainly, "that's fine for you. You've been longing for the hills. You—you aren't—

are you going to stay long?" Even as she faltered the question, she knew that this was his "news," that he was going, not to return.

"For as long as I live, lass. I'm only seventy-six now, and I come of a long-lived race."

Meggy's eyes were on her plate. The haggis she could not swallow. She took a sip of the strong hot tea, and looked up again.

"I'm real glad for you," she said with difficulty. "You'll be happier there." She *was* glad for him. Many a time they had been homesick together for the cloud shadows on the heather-covered hills, the parting mists, the fresh cold breath of the burn in the early morn, the twitter of birds in the fir trees after rain. But what would she do, now, with her long days? She closed her lips firmly over the rim of her teacup, and in a moment she was able to say, though her throat ached almost intolerably, "I'll miss you sorely."

"Aye, I'm afraid ye will, now. But not for long. Ye'll be going on to the next step soon. And I canna let this opportunity go by. The gentlemen from Argyleshire," he went on gently and smoothly, giving her time to recover herself, "came on various affairs, but they're lacking a minister, and they've offered me the kirk. Kirks, rather. Three of them. It's some years now since I've preached tae the people, but I've still my old sermons, and the doctrine is eternal. One sermon in English in the morning and one in Gaelic in the afternoon, a cir-

cuit of churches, so that I preach in each one once in three weeks or so. It won't take many different sermons," he finished contentedly. "I'll still have time for my researches into philosophy."

In the midst of her sorrow, Meggy could not help smiling a little at his sermon system, and then immediately was angry with herself. What if he did resurrect five or six old sermons and use them again and again? He would give to his people of his wisdom, his kindness, his understanding; he would be to them the guide and the friend that he was to her—and what were sermons, compared to that?

"When do you go?" she asked hastily.

"The morn's morn."

"Day after to-morrow," repeated Meggy, aghast. She could not finish her supper. She struggled to her feet. "I'll just wash the dishes for you," she murmured.

There was hot water still in the kettle, and she found a basin and a cloth. There were not many dishes to wash, but she scrubbed them till they shone, rubbed them dry, and polished them over and over. Mr. MacPherson stood looking at her with an expression in his eyes that she could not meet; there was compassion in it, and understanding, and a tinge of humor. He took out his fat silver turnip of a watch, wound it with a little key, and put it back again.

"Leave the pictures on the plate," he said, "and put out the scraps for wee dog over the way, and then come

and we'll have a chat in front of the fire before I take ye home. Lady Keith will no be worried about ye?"

"She's taking Veronica to a concert," said Meggy. She finished her tasks and came to sit on the creepie by the hearth.

"Ye put me in mind a bit of Flora MacDonald sometimes," said Mr. MacPherson, lighting his pipe with a coal from the fire. "Ye're a wee bit like her when she was a lass. Ye've got the same mild, gentle ways, that cover up a venturesome spirit underneath. Only she," he added innocently, "was bonny to look at."

It seemed to Meggy that all the world was pretty—all the feminine world. No one knew or cared if a man had a hooked nose, wing ears, and a squint, but the first thing—and the last—folk asked about a girl was: Is she pretty? However, it was fitting that Flora MacDonald should be bonny to look at. Fair, gentle, and dauntless, the savior of a Prince Charlie—there was an ideal for any lass!

"Tell me about her over again—what she was like," urged Meggy.

"She was like early morn with the dew on it still, wi' her bluebell eyes and her heart-shaped face and her laverock's voice. She'd been in a seminary for young ladies here in Edinburgh, and she'd visited the Countess of Eglinton in Ayrshire, but she was wild wi' joy to be back in the isles again. She'd grown up in sight of the hills—Arneval, Sheval, Reneval, Askeval, and the

long ridge of Ben More—and she loved each one, and many a time she'd been homesick for the glint of the sun on the lochs, and the pound of the sea." He paused and pulled thoughtfully on his pipe.

"The people of Uist called her Fionnghal, the Fair One," said Meggy.

"Aye, and she knew all the tales of the Western Isles, the hearsay, and the ballads and the sangs. She would play on the spinnet and sing the old Gaelic tunes."

"And the Prince?"

"The Prince was twenty-four. Puir lad, he'd swept down from the north and made his grand entry into Edinburgh, and he thocht he was in sight of the Court of St. James' itself, but he lost everything—and Scotland lost everything too—on Drummossie Moor. Aye, that was the battle of Culloden; your father was there, Meggy. And after the battle, there was the Prince hiding in a cave in Glen Corrodale, wi' a price of thirty thousand pounds on his bonny yellow head."

"The people knew he was there, too," put in Meggy proudly, "and not a soul among them would betray him."

"Not a one. They were poor folk, too, starving poor, some of them, but there wasna one who gave the thirty thousand pounds a thocht. They never so much as mentioned his name, lest the soldiers that were everywhere should hear; when they spoke of him to one another they called him the Yellow-haired Shepherd.

From Skye he could get a boat to France, but somebody had to put him over the Minch to Skye—and more soldiers pouring into the island every day, and shiploads of them scouring the sea. Someone had to help him, and Flora was the one. She was never wholly convinced of the righteousness of his cause"—Mr. MacPherson spoke as if it were the one flaw in an otherwise perfect character—"but her tender heart was touched by his distress—and he was a bonny lad, too!"

Meggy knew the story by heart: how Flora, over the protests of her elder brother, secured a passport for herself, a manservant, an Irish spinning maid named Betty Burke, and a crew of six to go to Armadale in Skye to visit her mother; how the Prince was disguised as Betty Burke in a flowered linen gown sprigged with blue, with a hooded mantle of dun-colored camlet; how they met on the shore at nightfall in a drenching rain and hid among the rocks until the four armed cutters near the shore moved off; how their boat, with muffled oars, stole out of a creek, and how they made the forty-mile journey to Skye lashed by the storm and fired at by soldiers along the coast of Waternish. They landed at dawn, and the Prince lay sheltered in a cave while Flora went on to Monkstadt, where her friend Lady Margaret MacDonald would help her. There she was shown into a drawing room filled with the military. Captain John MacLeod, in command of militia stationed two miles away, was instantly suspicious, but Flora

so captivated him by her charm that he took her in to dinner and forgot to have her boat examined. After midnight, when the guests had lingeringly departed, they met in secret conference, Flora, Lady Margaret, and MacDonald of Kingsburgh (who was later to be Flora's father-in-law), and decided what must be done next. The following day they pushed through the rain to Kingsburgh, where the Prince slept in a bed for the first time in weeks, and two days more found Charles safely on his way and Flora with her mother at Armadale.

"Her boat went back too soon," said Mr. MacPherson, "and they searched it and discovered the facts. When she was summoned to answer charges, her friends all were urging her to hide, but would she do it? Not Flory. There was a girl for ye, Meggy. She said she wasna sorry nor ashamed. They haled her to London to the Tower, but they didna dare keep her there: all London loved her and was clamoring to have her free. They showered her with entertainment and with gifts, and after a year they let her go home again. Neil MacEachan, who was with her through it all as her manservant, said he went up to London to be hanged, and he came back with Flory MacDonald in a coach and four."

Meggy was silent at the end of the story. To have a chance like that! To save one's Prince!

"Sometimes I think," said Mr. MacPherson, "the bravest thing she's ever done was to go to America."

"But surely—it's a grand new country," ventured Meggy.

"Aye, it's a grand new country. There are forests and rivers and rich lands and game without number, and freedom tae think as ye please. But there's also bitter storms and sickness and red savages—and hard work for everything ye get. There's nothing better than work, if ye have the zest and the health for it, but if ye haven't, ye've nothing. It's a country for the young, Meggy—and Flory must be turned fifty, for all she's so young in face and spirit. It's a brave deed for her to go to America."

"Many Scotsmen have gone," persisted Meggy.

"Aye, there's shiploads of them going every month or so, but not very many gentlefolk. The most of them are poor Highlanders fleeing from the high rents and the miserable laws that have been put on them. They're sae badly off here that they couldna be worse anywhere and sae might as well have a try at it. We've the House of Hanover tae thank for that," he finished bitterly.

Meggy looked up, diverted for the moment. She had thought of something. "If you have a church," she said, "you'll have to pray for the King. What are you going to do about that?"

How indeed was Mr. MacPherson, who held the Hanoverians as interlopers and tyrants, to pray sincerely for their well-being and success?

"I've thought of that, and I've found a way," he

said with satisfaction, "to get round Geordie. I'll juist say, 'Bless Thou the King and a' the royal family, and as *thou* hast made them great,'" he rolled out the words as if he were even then in the pulpit, "'*make them also good.*'"

Meggy laughed outright. She had herself no love for the House of Hanover, whose punishment had settled heavily upon her father and his draughty little castle and wide hilly lands, and it delighted her to think that, all unknown to His Majesty, an obscure Highland minister should be prayerfully snubbing him.

"Ah weel. It's growing late, Meggy lass. Sing to me a wee bit, and then I'll walk home wi' ye."

Sitting on the creepie by the fading fire, Meggy began a little Gaelic song that Mr. MacPherson had taught her, one of those that Flora used to sing as a girl in Uist. The air was willful and plaintive, and through the words she did not understand came a meaning, a loneliness and a longing. Her voice trembled on the last note, and then, her heart swelling and bursting, she buried her face in her lap and sobbed.

"I shouldna have asked ye to sing," said Mr. MacPherson quietly. "But it's a pleasure to hear ye. Ye've a real voice, Meggy. A lovely voice. It ought to have a bit of training."

"Sissilly of me," gulped Meggy, pressing her fingers against her wet eyes. "I never c-cry."

"A voice is as useful to a person as a beautiful face,"

Mr. MacPherson went on. "When ye're with fashionable folk—or unfashionable ones too, for the matter o' that—ye must have something to contribute and something they'll understand. Wealth and rank and beauty are the easiest things to see, but skill in dancing or a rare voice, and sometimes—but not sae often in a woman—a brilliant mind, are plain tae be seen, too. Nail folk's attention wi' something that shows outwardly, and then they'll get acquainted wi' the inward qualities of your soul. Ye've real courage and spirit and loyalty, and a deal too much feeling, Meggy, but your looks dinna suggest it. Ye'd better cultivate your voice. I've nae doubt ye could dance too, wi' your slimness and suppleness, but I havena much opeenion of all this fiddlin' and minuetin' and gavan-ing; it's compromising wi' the devil. Now there's nae harm in a good strathspey tae the pipes, but they're too fine for that in Edinburgh."

"I'll have as much chance to do one as the other," said Meggy with a sigh, "at my aunt Keith's."

"Ye'll be coming up for society after Veronica marries. Lady Keith doesna notice ye now, but she's a managing kind of body, and when Veronica's awa' she'll manage ye—if she thinks ye'll not shame her. It may not be the thing ye'd like best in the world—I ken ye're itching tae be rowing princes over the water—but make yourself strong for the life ye're in, and ye'll be strong for any."

He held her cloak for her, and composedly, though her

breath still came in jerks, she wrapped it around her and tied on the beaver hat again.

"But dinna ye forget, Meggy, that in the end it's the spirit ye have that counts, and ye get your spirit from above and not out of yourself or your teachers. If I can persuade your uncle to give ye a music master," he finished abruptly, "will ye promise to work hard at the spinnet?"

Meggy promised. Mr. MacPherson put on his great-coat and his worn black hat, took his tall cane, and they went out onto the Lawnmarket.

The air was wet and smelled of the sea. Around infrequent lamps it showed white, and the pavement underfoot glistened. Overhead were the tall houses with their rank on rank of windows, and here and there lights twinkling faintly through the mist. An occasional passer, hugging the inside wall, pushed by, or a coach rattled over the paving stones, but for the most part there were few on the street. From John Dowie's tavern came a burst of hearty laughter and a snatch of song; the Toon Rottens (as the City Guard were called) huddled in the house, talked mutteringly; a woman's shriek sounded from one pitch-black wynd, the husky wail of a bagpipe from another. A whole city was about its business indoors.

"Auld Reekie is beautiful," said Mr. MacPherson, "but oh, the beauty of the hills—and the freedom."

Freedom! The hills to climb and the forests to roam.

Meggy felt as though she could not bear to be left in Edinburgh, pent up, stifled, alone.

"Oh, take me with you," she cried.

"Na, na, my child, I couldna do that," said the old minister hastily. "You must stay here. Besides," he added with a sigh, "the hills are no' sae free as they used to be, except for them, like me, who are too auld to crave what the world craves. The young and the eager are ganging, like Flory MacDonald, over yonder to America."

A tall lad came up behind them and passed on. For a moment he was silhouetted against the light from an open door—kilts swinging and bonnet atilt—and then he was gone in the blackness. His voice floated back to them. He was singing a catchy Gaelic song that was popular in the Highlands.

"'*Dod a ah 'iarruidh an fhortain do North Carolina*,'" Mr. MacPherson repeated the refrain. "Going to seek a fortune in North Carolina."

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH VERONICA GETS INTO A PICKLE

THE leaden days crept past. It snowed; little white drifts sifted in around the windows, and the black-green firs in the Cannongate gardens held up armfuls of white and then silently dropped them. It thawed; the narrow paved streets were slippery with greasy slush. It blew; windows rattled and shutters banged; a red-nosed Highlander, one of the City Guard, had his three-cornered hat blown down the street and his stiff fat pigtail turned up over the back of his head. Meggy laughed, though her chapped lips cracked. It rained; a wet, cold, persistent rain; and people coming in from out of doors steamed before the fire and smelled of wet wool. Once in awhile the sun came out and rode high in the sky, a pale ball almost like a moon. It cast thin uncertain shadows and a thin uncertain glow. Sea gulls wheeled overhead until it subsided, early in the afternoon, into a bank of mist.

A singing master for Meggy had been mentioned, and forgotten. She played the spinnet and sang to herself when she was alone in the drawing room, and she

read whatever books and papers she could find lying about. *Clarissa Harlowe*, which seemed to be a most affecting tale, disappeared just as she was becoming interested in it; Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* proved to be more stationary but also harder to understand. From an occasional *Edinburgh Magazine* or *Scots Town and Country* she gathered that there was unrest in the American colonies and that the colonists were complaining warmly of injustice. There were letters signed Atticus and letters signed Patrioticus which spoke vaguely and vehemently in capital letters of Justice and Obedience and the Majesty of the Mother Country and the Ingratitude of the Colonies, and more explicitly in small letters of taxes and trade. There seemed to be no doubt in the mind of Atticus and Patrioticus that the case called for Severity and Firmness. Meggy was indignant and looked in vain for letters championing the cause of the colonies, in particular of North Carolina, where Flora MacDonald was.

The rest of her time she spent in walking, bent against the wind, along the blowy streets, where the wide sky seemed so close and the things for which she longed so terribly far away; or in writing letters to Mr. MacPherson, long letters which she knew he would never see for she had no idea how to get them to him; or in watching for Ewan. He seemed to be extremely busy these days. He was always in a hurry; he would go striding along, looking important and excited. Some-

times when she met him on the turnpike stair he would tease her in the old way, calling her "mild, meek, mansuet Merg'rit," or humming mockingly, "Meg was meek and Meg was mild, Sweet and harmless as a child," but often he passed her by without a sign, and Meggy realized that though he looked at her he had not seen her.

Even Veronica was preoccupied. She was being a success, and her mother redoubled her efforts. They were hot on the trail of every dinner party and rout, every concert, every ball. She danced five pairs of embroidered satin slippers to ribbons, and although there was groaning and muttering and not a little sarcasm on the part of Sir Douglas about the shocking expense, she achieved a complete new wardrobe in the middle of the season. Another cloak fell to Meggy, a hooded one lined with scarlet, but she could not bring herself to wear it. It looked like Veronica. It is painful, thought Meggy, to watch people's faces fade as they discover me in Veronica's hood.

Veronica had a maid now, who came in at night to help her undress and to tie up the elaborate powdered coiffure that a hairdresser came every other day to construct, and after the maid was gone the girl would collapse into her bed and fall asleep at once. There was no chance now for the delicious and exciting confidences that Meggy used to stay awake to hear. Veronica asleep, Meggy would lie with open eyes in the darkness, wondering whether the steady, husky sounds she heard were

the ghost of the land which came and breathed outside one's door when something momentous was going to happen, or simply the snoring of Uncle Keith, muffled by the thickness of the stone wall.

It was the middle of February. The fire had been lit in the girls' bedroom against Veronica's return. Lady Keith's room was large and lavish, with its great oil painting of a court beauty by Sir Peter Lely, its enormous bed curtained in glowing red damask, its japanned dressing table, but the chamber which Veronica and Meggy shared was small and simple and chilly. Two narrow beds, hung with thin fluttering muslin, two washstands, whose plain white pitchers held icy water, the fireplace where the coals glowed red, and Veronica's small dressing table filled it completely. They kept their clothes in a big wardrobe in the corridor.

"There's *nothing* for me," said Meggy, out loud, for the sake of hearing her own voice. "I could go up in blue smoke, and nobody would know the difference."

She turned down Veronica's bed and shook up her pillow. Out of the pillow slip tumbled a thin pamphlet and flapped on the floor. Meggy picked it up.

"Information concerning the Province of North Carolina," she made out in the red half-light, "addressed to emigrants from the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland by an Impartial Hand." Something in smaller, heavier black type eluded her straining eyes. She lit a candle. "*Nos patriam fugimus*," it said.

The printed words flowed across the rough surface of the pages. Meggy skipped through the introduction, which set forth the grievances of the Highlanders, the high rents, and oppression, as she had heard them from Mr. MacPherson. North Carolina . . .

"The jessamine, the laurel, the bay, the sassafras, the pines, the honeysuckle, the dogwood and most kinds of shrubs," the Impartial Hand had written, "enrich the air with their fragrant odors. . . . The mariners going upon the coast in spring have smelt the pines when several leagues at sea."

What was Veronica doing with this? Veronica, who, now that her "education" was completed, scarcely read anything but the missives of literary and lovelorn suitors? Veronica, who thought America was populated by a very few English officers in well-fitting red uniforms and a vast number of red savages in no uniforms at all. Meggy shook off the thought as she shook a sandy fringe of hair out of her eyes, and plunged eagerly on.

"Merchants in the town and considerable planters in the country are generous, well bred and dress much . . . are polite, humane and hospitable; and never tired of rendering strangers all the service in their power."

Voices and footsteps in the corridor preceded the entrance of Veronica and a yawning, middle-aged maid.

"You may go, Kirsty," said Veronica, without looking at her. "I shan't need you to-night."

"Now, Miss Veronica, your hair——" The rest of

the protest was lost in a yawn that brought tears to her eyes and threatened to dislocate her jaw.

Veronica unfastened a loop of rosebuds from the white mountain of her hair and tossed it absently on the dressing table. "It can't last another day," she declared crossly. "If I don't scratch my head soon I'll die." She stood pushing the tall superstructure gently back and forward with one small white hand. "Oh, well, I'll tie it up. You go along."

Kirsty, with a final agonized yawn, took herself off, and Veronica locked the door behind her. She stood for a moment, ear to the crack, listening for departing footsteps, before she turned and said dramatically:

"Meggy, I'm in the most fearful pickle."

Meggy closed the book in her lap. Veronica was always in a pickle, and Meggy was always interested.

"Veronica! Again?" she said. "Tell me all about it."

Veronica sat down on the bed and Meggy knelt to take off her high-heeled slippers of sky-blue satin. The girl's cold, cramped little toes, liberated, wiggled luxuriously under their silk stockings.

"Mmm, that's *good*. Willie Cumming stepped right on my toes. He doused his handkerchief with peppermint instead of scent," she added irrelevantly, "and never knew the difference. He went about flourishing it and looking as pleased as Punch—and reeking like an apothecary shop."

"Was that the pickle?" said Meggy, laughing.

"No, this is serious, Meg." She peeled a small black patch from near the corner of her red mouth, and holding it on one pointed finger looked at it, thoughtful, a little frightened, more than a little excited. "I don't know how to begin. I'm afraid you'll be shocked."

Shocked. Well as Meggy knew that her cousin was merely postponing the moment of revelation to make it more dramatic, she still wished that Veronica had chosen another word than shocked. Thrilled, amazed, even horrified, Meggy was willing to be, but *shocked*—it sounded so old, so smug, so pricknickety.

"No, I shan't be shocked," she murmured.

"Well, then." Veronica leaned forward, her elbows on her knees, her hands clasped, and said breathlessly, "Meggy, Ewan's going to America and he wants me to go with him."

America. *Ewan*. Meggy gasped. Was everyone going away?

"He seemed so different," Veronica was saying. "He seemed older, and more intense, and more—more masterful. I could love a masterful man," she added plaintively. "He said I must go with him."

Veronica in America. Meggy groped with a cold and shaking hand for the pamphlet that had slipped to the floor.

"Aunt Keith would never let you go—not in a thousand years."

"She wouldn't know till it was all over. Nobody is to

know but you. Ewan said you would help us. You're to pack a bag for me—nobody notices what you're doing—and smuggle it onto the stair at dusk. Then he will fetch it and take it to the ship. All I have to do is to slip away from the Munros' rout in the evening and run across the street to the White Horse Inn. It—it sounds vastly simple."

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"Veronica, you never said you'd do it?"

"I—might have. I must have. Oh, Meggy, I know I did. That's why I'm in such a pickle." She pulled a blanket from the bed and wrapped it around her shoulders, tucked her stockinged feet childishly beneath her. She looked frightened and guilty and triumphant all at once. "You see," she explained, "Ewan told me a month ago as a secret he was going. And when I remembered that this was his last night and I thought of the way he writes little poems to me and kisses my hand and never wants to be with any other girl if I'm around, even if his hair is yellow instead of raven, I was sorry, and I thought I might be a little kinder to him than usual, just for to-night—and then the next thing I knew he was begging me to go with him, and I couldn't very well say No after what I'd just said when I thought I wasn't going to see him again, and then he was telling me I *must* go with him, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings and he looked so—so masterful, and then—I must have said I would. No other girl gets herself into such pickles as I do!" Again the look blended of fright

and a certain abashed triumph flickered over her face; the triumph vanished, however, and for a moment before she lowered her fringy lashes the fright alone looked out of her eyes. "If Mother finds it out she will be raging. Meggy, what am I going to do?"

"Do? Why, you needn't do anything. Ewan must be insane. What would he do with you in America?"

Veronica had one of her sudden changes of front.

"I promised to go," she said, lifting her chin haughtily, "and I'll do it. Besides, I really shouldn't do so badly in America. It is vastly more civilized than you think. Ewan gave me a book this afternoon to prove it. Where is it? Oh, you have it. He says it says the planters have elegant houses and sumptuous entertainments."

Meggy was silent. It was wiser not to fix Veronica's wavering determination by opposition. She felt bewildered. It sounded so definite, some of it, so wild and absurd the rest. But people did go to America. Flora MacDonald—Ewan—*Veronica*. The pamphlet was open on her lap.

"'Poverty,'" she read aloud, "'is almost an entire stranger among them, as the settlers are the most hospitable and charitable people that can be met with to all strangers, and especially to such as by accident and misfortunes are rendered incapable to provide for themselves.' That may be," commented Meggy judicially, "but a full purse is more dependable. How are you and Ewan planning to provide for yourselves?"

"Ewan is to make his fortune. Mr. Archibald Moncrief has connections out there in a city called Wilmington, in one of the Carolinas, and he is to get a post for Ewan. And when he has had time to look about he'll buy a plantation and some slaves and horses and be a wealthy planter. And I," finished Veronica, looking under her lashes at Meggy to observe the effect of her words, "am to be his wife. A Highland minister is sailing on the ship with us and we'll be married the first day out."

This was definite, appallingly definite. Meggy, crouched beside the fire with Ewan's pamphlet squeezed in her fingers, had a vision of Veronica—free, married to Ewan, facing the open sea—the pines and honeysuckle of North Carolina, the elegant houses and sumptuous entertainment of the planters. She had also a vision of Lady Keith "raging" indeed, bereft of her daughter, tortured with anxiety. What ought Meggy to do?

"When"—she moistened her dry lips—"when does the ship sail?" In a month, or even in a week, Veronica would be afire with some new idea, this mad scheme would be dusty on the shelf.

"To-morrow night." Defiantly spoken.

To-morrow night. Ewan knew his Veronica; knew that if he gave her time to think there would not be a chance of her going. Not quite fair of Ewan—or perhaps he too acted on impulse.

"All you have to do, Meggy," said Veronica, "is to pack that little bag, the horsehair one, and put it on the turnpike stair at five. There will be a monstrous crush at the Munros' to-morrow evening—their rooms are small and Mother will be playing cards and no one will notice—and I am to slip out while it is at its height and run down the street to the White Horse Inn. A Miss Cameron is going to be there; she is taking some nephews to Wilmington, and I'm to go with her in a carriage to the boat. Ewan will be already there, and it sails at midnight. It's vastly simple." Veronica spoke as if she were repeating a lesson memorized. "Though I think I could do it better if Ewan were at the party and took me away with him. But he says his father and his older brother will be at the boat to see him off, and no one must know I'm there. He thinks I'm very brave and daring."

Veronica's voice, retailing the plan in all its details, faltered. Meggy drew a long breath. She knew, better than the girl herself, that Veronica had no real intention of going. She was merely playing with the idea, picturing herself for a moment in a dramatic rôle. Did Ewan actually think she could do it: steal away from a humdrum party, join the unknown aunt of somebody, ride in an unknown carriage to an unknown ship, and set sail at midnight over a sea so vast that it took at least a month to cross it to a continent so vast that no one had ever found the other side? Veronica, who trembled

at the sight of a mouse and would not venture alone on the turnpike stair after dark? Silly Ewan, to think she would! A man, reflected Meggy, judges entirely by appearances. Veronica, with her provocative eyes, her little aquiline nose, her imperious chin, looked like a heroine of high adventure, while Meggy, little, pale, sandy-haired Meggy . . .

Meggy's heart began to thump. It rose into her throat and almost suffocated her. Veronica would never go. Everything was carefully planned; Ewan was not to see her until the next morning, after the boat had sailed.

Veronica laughed. "And I told him I'd go, Meggy. What shall I do?"

Three loud knocks on the wall indicated that Sir Douglas had waked and wanted quiet. The two girls scrambled out of their clothes and into their ruffled cambric nightgowns. Without a word they dived into their beds.

But a little later, when Veronica was sound asleep, Meggy cautiously pushed the covers back, rose and lit the candle. She wrapped a blanket tight around her and held Ewan's pamphlet close to the flickering light.

"They have abundance, nay affluence, and enjoy independence, which we all know is a great sweetener of life and every blessing, and makes up for many superfluous refinements in what is called polite society."

The small black letters danced and blurred. The can-

dle guttered and the flame sizzled against the wet wax. A rat squeaked in the walls; the wind swirled around the tall building, rattled the windows, and went off howling along the narrow street below. Meggy sneezed and read on.

"Let them hasten," concluded the Impartial Hand, "across the Atlantic and carry over with them some remains of the true old British spirit before it be totally vitiated and extinguished."

Meggy closed the book and blew out the little piece of candle. Hasten across the Atlantic. It was, as Veronica said, vastly simple.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH MEGGY MAKES PREPARATIONS FOR A VOYAGE

MEGGY woke early, stiff and aching, well-nigh frozen. She had drawn her feet up under her, and now, cramped though she was, she could not thrust them down again into the iciness of the lower part of the bed. Her breath was a stiff white feather in the gray air; her nose felt as if it had been carved out of ice. For a moment she lay there, concerned only with the misery of cold, wondering vaguely what it was that made the taut feeling in her chest.

Then she remembered, and was up at once, moving softly in order not to disturb Veronica. One who must prepare in a single day to go to America cannot afford to lie abed until the fire is made. She crept painfully into the garments that had been chilling all the night long, donned the quilted petticoat and jacket of blue callimanco, slipped her feet into the buckled leather shoes (shaped alike and worn on alternate feet on alternate days), and, breaking the film of ice in the pitcher, dashed her face with water and wiped the trickles from her neck. Her hair when she brushed it crackled and

snapped; the fine cold spray of it clung to her face, to the brush, to her fingers.

The kitchen was warm. A fire burned in the huge fireplace. The servants were moving about and talking.

"She's up to something, that one," Kirsty was saying as Meggy entered. "'You may go, Kirsty,' she said to me."

She saw Meggy and stopped short. The cook began to talk, and the tide of kitchen gossip flowed away to safer topics.

The porridge kettle steamed on the hearth. Its lid lifted to let out a foam of bubbles and settled again. The servants made the morning porridge early and ate it while it was at its best; what was left was sent to the family. The cook, heavy and good-natured and indifferent, dipped out a bowl of porridge with a big iron spoon and handed it to Meggy. That same cook had once burned her hand badly on the roasting spit, and Meggy had bathed it with sweet oil and bound it up, but the little act had established no contact between the two. The servants adored Veronica, inconsiderate, relentless as she was in her demands on them. She was their drama, their romance, a constant entertainment for them. Quiet Meggy they ignored, or perhaps, and this was far worse, even pitied her a little.

"Nobody," said Meggy to herself, "*nobody* will miss me when I'm gone."

Sitting on a stool almost within the arch of the fireplace, with the talk of the servants in their broad Lowland accent drifting unheard around her, Meggy ate her breakfast and laid her plans.

Under no circumstances, and in no way, she resolved firmly, would she be dependent on Ewan. Ewan or anybody else. Hospitable as the settlers might be, they should never have a chance to say that Meggy MacIntosh had been incapable of providing for herself. Money she must have, enough to pay for her passage and to keep her going until she reached Flora MacDonald. After that she would earn her way. Flora MacDonald had young children; Meggy would be their tutor, their nurse, their maid—anything to be near her ideal, to be free, to be needed. The only possessions of value that were unquestionably and wholly hers were the MacIntosh jewels, the few remaining trinkets in the collection that had once been famous. Meggy hoped that her father could not know what was going to happen to them; he would feel that when the last of their jewels were sold, then the MacIntoshes were lost indeed. Her few treasures were kept in the little secret cupboard behind a panel in the drawing room; Meggy had only to find a moment when the room was empty and take them out. For the rest, her preparations would be simply to pack the little horsehair hand bag which she had brought with her from the Highlands and stow it on the stair in the shadows at five o'clock.

It was so easy. If only it had been more difficult! Alone and small and unwanted as she had felt when she came from the mountains four years ago, it was as nothing to the utter loneliness she felt now. Her arrival had at least caused a temporary inconvenience and annoyance; her departure would cause nothing. Veronica —she drew a sharp breath—might miss a willing listener, but not for long.

Kirsty went away with a scuttleful of coals to build the fires and Cook began to prepare trays. Meggy thought she would leave notes for Veronica and for Lady Keith, to tell where she had gone. The one to Veronica would be the harder. How to avoid the appearance of treachery? How to tell her humbly that in running off with Ewan in Veronica's place she had no thought of supplanting her in his heart (the mere denial of such an idea was preposterous and impertinent), but only of reaching Flora MacDonald? To Lady Keith she would write: "Honored Madam: I would not seem to you Ungrateful, but——"

"Miss Veronica would like tae ha'e a worrud with ye," Kirsty broke in upon her thoughts.

The bedroom was warm now, and Veronica, in petticoat and sacque, sat before her dressing table admiring her pretty hands.

"Shut the door, Meggy. I've scarcely slept a wink all night, thinking about what I told you last evening. And you know, Meggy," she said virtuously, "I realize that

it would break my mother's heart if I eloped with Ewan to America. Of course, if I don't go it will break Ewan's. You've no idea how *painful* it is," with a complacence that denied any very acute suffering, "to be the kind of person that breaks hearts whatever she does. But between the two I think my *duty* is to my mother."

Meggy suppressed a smile at the novel sight of Veronica playing the rôle of dutiful daughter with such patent enjoyment.

"The point now," said Veronica, coming down to practical matters with a thud, "is to break it gently to Ewan."

"You might write him a note," said Meggy, her own "Honored Madam" and "Dear Cozzin" epistles still gathering form in her mind.

"Hmm-hmm. I could do that. But my mother just might find it, and there's no necessity to let her know anything at all about it." A bell rang. "My father wants his breakfast." She started out of the door and turned back to say, "I think just silence is the kindest way, don't you, Meggy?"

Meggy was glad that she did not wait for an answer. The breaking of the news to Ewan, she reflected, would take place, and not too gently, on the morrow when he came face to face with Meggy on the deck of the *Bachelor of Leith*.

It was the habit of Lady Keith to breakfast in bed while Veronica in the study brewed her father's tea

and toasted his bread. The original purpose of this arrangement had been to train the girl in housewifely and dutiful service and at the same time to develop her mind and character with pearls of wisdom and admonition from her father's lips. In practice, however, Veronica teased and diverted Sir Douglas, and seized the moment of softening to wheedle from him various indulgences and privileges.

Meggy listened for the flow of chatter from the study, and then slipped into the empty drawing room. A shaft of watery sunshine spanned the room and lit up the great landscape by Norrie on the west wall. It shone faintly warm on Meggy's head as she knelt and pressed the panel beneath the picture for the secret cupboard.

Slowly, for it was seldom used, the little door swung open. Meggy, wondering why she felt so guilty in taking what was her own, thrust her hand into the cobwebby hole and brought out the little chamois bag that held her fortune. She closed the panel again and, rising, went to the east window. There on the sill she shook out her jewels: the pair of rubies set in old twisted red gold, eardrops for a court beauty of other days; the emerald, cool green fire on its gossamer chain, that was so large that the tiny flaw in it spoiled only a corner of it. They glowed and flashed in the sunshine like living pain, the last of the glory of her family. Meggy swept them into the little bag, hung its ribbon around her neck, and tucked it down in the front of her dress.

There were guests for dinner. At three a large company sat around the table. Kirsty was helping to serve; a man dressed in the green and gold livery of the Keiths appeared from nowhere to stand at attention behind the head of the table. The kitchen was in a tumult. Rich-flavored steam clouded the ceiling; food stood waiting in order, the roast, the pudding, the sweet, the wines; Cook was tense and busy; underlings fell over one another.

Meggy crammed her few possessions into the worn little bag, and with growing apprehension waited for the time to put it outside on the stair. How, with a houseful of guests, was she to smuggle out a horsehair valise without being seen? If only they would go on eating!

The rounds of toasts were in full swing. The guests were offering "sentiments" to be quaffed off: "May the friends of our youth be the companions of our old age." "May the light of affection never grow dim."

The party was almost at an end. Pressing the bag between her body and the wall of the corridor, Meggy stole past the dining parlor. She had a panicky vision of the entire company bursting forth to fall over her and her bag.

It was done. She closed the creaking door, and almost before the latch clicked—he must have been watching—she heard Ewan's springy step and the catchy Gaelic song that made her heart bounce under the green callimanco.

"'*Dod a ah 'iarruidh an fhortain do North Carolina.*'"

In another moment there was a great scraping of chairs and the flood of voices drew nearer the door. Meggy scurried back to her bedroom. The first hurdle was taken.

The second threatened to be more difficult. Veronica suddenly balked at the Munros' rout. She did not want to go, she declared from her bed where she lay resting; she was tired. She closed her eyes, a wan sufferer, and pressed her hand palm outward against her forehead, while Lady Keith stood over her fairly stuttering with exasperation.

"You let Miss Farquhar Graeme walk off with Sir Archibald under your very nose last night," she scolded, "while you squandered your time on Ewan MacNeill, who is a younger son and practically penniless. Now you'll have another chance to-night. Are you going deliberately to throw it aside? I wouldn't say a word if you weren't in looks, but you are. Those faint shadows under your eyes positively become you."

"I can't go," said Veronica, in a voice that was scarcely more than a breath.

Meggy could not tell whether Veronica was really fatigued or whether for sentimental reasons she preferred not to go to the party. Meggy only knew that if Veronica and her nother were in the house her own departure would be considerably more difficult to effect. She felt shabby, therefore, as she said guilefully, "Is Miss Farquhar Graeme so very beautiful?"

Veronica sat up. "No," she said shortly, "she's not. I suppose," she added with a martyred look, "I shall have to go."

All three went, in festive attire, a little late: Sir Douglas and Lady Keith and Veronica. Meggy watched them go. She felt sick and hollow when the little flurry of their departure died away. She wanted to run after them, to tell them something, to get from them some look of recognition, some word for herself alone that she could remember as a farewell. But she could think of no pretext that would not be merely an interruption and an annoyance. She turned back.

It was late, and she too must hurry. She put on the hooded cloak lined with scarlet which she had not yet worn, felt in the bosom of her dress for the little chamois bag of jewels, opened the door silently and slipped out. The turnpike stair was empty, but Meggy hurled herself down as if the ghost of the land were at her heels.

The street was cold and dark, swept clean by the wind. Meggy had never been out alone so late before. She drew back in the shelter of the doorway to hug her cloak tighter around her. Far, far in the distance the thought of Flora MacDonald gave her courage; Flora MacDonald and the fragrant pines and honeysuckle. To-night there was the inn to find, to-morrow Ewan to face.

She lowered her head into the wind and started off.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH MEGGY CATCHES THE "BACHELOR OF LEITH"

TRAVELERS to Leith, and beyond Leith to the north, usually started from the White Horse Inn. It stood in a wynd off the Cannongate, and the high flight of steps on its front branched out to left and right in two arms that seemed to hold up the balconies of the second floor. The paved courtyard was filled with a confusion of coachmen, horses, carriages, and postboys, fantastically lit by the uncertain glow of torches and lanterns.

Breathless—she had run the last half of the way, fancying that someone was following her—Meggy leaned against the wall in the shadows to get her bearings. Her heart pounded; her breath came fast; her cheeks were hot. The forlorn feeling had vanished. This was adventure! She felt in the front of her dress again for the MacIntosh jewels, and pulled the hood of her cloak across her face. She tried to remember that she was Veronica. How would Veronica act? She would, Meggy smiled to herself, ask the advice of the nearest man; that is to say, the nearest gentleman. Certainly

not of the little group of loafers collected in the courtyard to watch the carriages drive off, who were already looking at her with curiosity. Head proudly high, making herself look as tall as she could, Meggy crossed the courtyard to the stairs.

At the foot of the flight she found two boys, of twelve and seven, perhaps. They both wore the regular schoolboy corduroy breeches tied at the knees with bunchy knots of tape, the green coats and scarlet waistcoats. But the high polish on their square-toed, brass-buckled shoes, their white cotton stockings and white ruffled shirts showed that they were dressed for an occasion. The elder lad, too, had an air of importance. He squared his shoulders and waggled his dark head.

"You are Miss Veronica Keith," he stated.

Meggy remembered that she was Veronica. Tossing her head, so that the light from the lantern above should not shine in her face, she laughed lightly.

"Perhaps I am," she teased him, staying as close to the truth as she dared, "and perhaps I'm not. Who may you be?"

The boy made her a very grand bow. "Willie Cameron, at your service ma'am," he said elegantly. "And this is my brother Alexander. I promised Ewan that I'd take care of you."

The little boy beamed shyly and kicked the lowest step. He had round sweet eyes in a slender face, and one front tooth was missing.

"Aunt is up there," said Willie, and they went up.

Meggy need not have feared that Miss Cameron would detect the counterfeit Veronica. She was far too much concerned with the exciting fact of her own trip. She stood in a circle of bags and boxes and piled wraps on the outstretched arm of a stolid, grim, disgruntled maidservant.

"Well, my dear, so you've come," she said, without looking at Meggy. "My smelling salts, Jenny? Oh. Now at least we shan't have to wait for you. I hope you know what you are doing, that is all I have to say. (Did you say the saline drops were here?) 'All for love and the world well lost' never was my motto. Though perhaps if it had been I shouldn't be a spinster at forty-nine escorting someone else's sons across three or four thousand miles of cold wet ocean. (Save out that shawl to put around Alexander; he's taking cold now.) Willie, just go see if the coach is ready. We might as well be on the boat as here."

The coach was cold and musty; it smelled of horses and of the straw that covered its drafty floor. I'll be smelling the sea soon, thought Meggy, and then pines and honeysuckle. She squeezed back in her corner. Miss Cameron had the other corner with Alexander between, and Willie and Jenny faced them. There were shouted orders, the crack of a whip, the harsh grate of iron on stone as the horses strained, slipped, pulled. The coach jerked; they jolted against one another. They were off!

At the head of the wynd they stopped again. Willie, leaning out to crane and look, reported a carriage drawn up in front of them. Footsteps came toward them and the next second the door opened and a man thrust his head and shoulders through the aperture. Miss Cameron gasped in terror.

"Don't be alarmed," said Ewan. "I stopped to see if you were getting started comfortably." His eyes searched the corner. "Veronica?" he said uncertainly.

Meggy, her toes curling inside her shoes, shrank back still more into the darkness.

"She's here," said Miss Cameron. "Though I confess I cannot comprehend anyone's deliberately undertaking a voyage of this sort. You are sure you want to go?" she demanded, turning to Meggy. "Look at him again and think if you really want to exchange your mamma and your balls and routs for Mr. Ewan MacNeill and the colonies."

Meggy looked at him, or at what she could see of him in the dimness—his fine profile, the satisfied cock of his head. She remembered she was Veronica. (If only she *were* Veronica!)

"You can still change your mind if you wish to," Miss Cameron was saying. "Decide now that you want to go back, and I'll take you to your party, or whatever it was you ran away from. Probably no one will ever know. What about it?"

What would Veronica say?

"Tell her, Veronica," said Ewan huskily.

"Do you like him well enough to spend your life on a rice plantation with him?"

She might say, with Veronica's flippant lift of the shoulders, "I think he'll do nicely, thank you." She might say, with complete truth, "He's my only chance of seeing America." But she was afraid of betraying herself if she spoke. She drew a breath and hummed softly:

"'*Dod a ah 'iarruidh an fhortain do North Carolina.*'"

"Veronica!" Adoration. Rapture. Meggy fairly curled within herself, thinking of the inevitable reckoning to come. "My father and brother are ahead. I must go. Till to-morrow, my darling."

He reached into the coach for Meggy's—or Veronica's—hand, and encountering Miss Cameron's instead, shook it vigorously, pulled Willie's hat down over his nose, and was off running.

"Oof," sputtered Willie indignantly. "If I were ten years older I'd call him out for that!"

The coach jerked and rattled and rumbled; it heaved and it jolted. The night air came in around the cracks. Miss Cameron wrapped a knitted shawl around Alexander's shoulders and he went to sleep leaning against Meggy. His heavy round head wobbled on her arm until, shifting her position, she put her arm around him and fitted him into the hollow of her shoulder. She was tired, too, and soon her whole side ached from his weight.

But there was something comforting in the nearness of his warm, sleepy body, so young and so trusting. She rested her cheek against his hair and thought about North Carolina.

Leith. It meant black shapes of houses in the darkness; scattered lights; the clatter and blaze of an inn; the docks; the smell of the waterfront, of wet piles, of fish and seaweed and salt air; the black gleam of water under a ship's light.

A small boat carried them out to the *Bachelor of Leith* among the fishing smacks, the frigates, the brigs riding at anchor in the harbor. Sailors helped them up the ladder. Meggy was thankful when they all stood on deck, the little boys, Miss Cameron, Jenny, and herself. The captain greeted them with florid expressions of welcome, and while he spoke Miss Cameron looked critically about her.

Barrels and boxes and kegs seemed to be everywhere; even the cabin, to which they descended by the companionway, was cluttered.

"It doesn't look very shipshape," said Miss Cameron.

As soon as they started, the captain explained, everything would be stowed away. There was no place so neat and clean as a ship, he said.

"Well, I'm sure I hope so," returned Miss Cameron skeptically.

Ewan and his father and brother must have stopped at the inn, for they were nowhere to be seen. Meggy

fidgeted miserably; if only all this chitchat would cease and they could go to their staterooms and be hidden till the morrow.

The stateroom that Miss Cameron and Meggy were to share was about five feet long and six feet wide. A narrow bunk on each side (what, thought Meggy, was to keep them from rolling off these strips of shelf?) occupied most of the meager space, but between the bunks and underneath them bedding was spread out on the floor for Mrs. Jenny. A porthole and the door, which was in two sections, an upper and a lower one, provided air and light.

"Humph!" said Miss Cameron. "They call this a stateroom."

Meggy felt as if she were moving in a dream. This time yesterday she had faced a lifetime of drab, empty days. To-night she was embarking for America. What surprises might to-morrow hold for her? The thought occurred to her, dimly and coldly, that to-morrow she might be found out, disgraced, set back upon the land to return to her aunt Keith; but she pressed her hand against the MacIntosh jewels and told herself firmly that anyone with sufficient determination and the means to pay her own way could go where she wished.

She was glad when Miss Cameron and Mary went off to settle the boys for the night and left her alone in the tiny cubicle of a stateroom. She closed the door and in the candlelight surveyed the quarters which were to

be hers for the next four weeks or more, her niche in the heart of a fleeting ship. She marked the narrower of the two berths for her own, and hung her cloak upon the peg above it. What next? She stood there irresolute.

Footsteps on the deck above and voices in the cabin warned her that Ewan had arrived. She tore off her dress and her shoes, blew out the candle, and dived into bed, drawing the covers over her incriminating sandy head. She was not going to be dragged out to-night to discovery if feigning sleep could prevent it.

In a little while footsteps approached along the passage and the half door was let down.

"Miss Keith?" Miss Cameron's voice. "Miss Keith. She's actually asleep. Upon my word these modern young ladies take their adventures calmly. Give her bag to Jenny, Mr. MacNeill, and go away and let her rest. There will be little enough of that for her later, what with storms at sea, and red savages, and disaffected colonists on land—if we ever reach it."

Meggy felt the bag deposited on the end of the bunk beside her feet. The half door was closed again and another candle placed upon the shelf. The stateroom seemed to be crammed full of women. Meggy, though with her face to the wall and her eyes screwed shut she saw nothing, heard the thud of elbows against the side of the bunk, the sighs and grunts, the final creaks and settlings, and at last Miss Cameron's hissing whisper:

"My saline drops, Jenny? Oh, here they are. My smelling salts; now the candle. Dear me, to think that the ship has not even weighed anchor yet! I feel as if I were in mid-Atlantic."

Meggy waited until the regular breathing of Miss Cameron and the snores of Mrs. Jenny told her that they were both asleep before she turned back the covers of her bunk, opened her bag, and finished her own undressing. She was much too excited to sleep. She, Meggy MacIntosh, in the brigantine *Bachelor of Leith*, bound for Wilmington in North Carolina, was actually about to hasten across the Atlantic. She longed to send word to Mr. MacPherson. He had never imagined that her opportunity would come so soon, and in this way.

The noise and confusion that suddenly burst upon the deck an hour later woke Miss Cameron and Mrs. Jenny.

"The ship is going down!" gasped the latter.

"Jenny, my saline drops."

In the midst of the shouting and the running and the creaking of ropes, the ship gave a shiver and seemed to move.

"They were weighing anchor," said Miss Cameron nautically. "We ought to have gone on deck to see it. It is a fateful act. Well, Miss Keith—is Miss Keith awake, Jenny?—it is too late to change your mind now."

Meggy forgot to be Veronica. "I have no wish," she said earnestly, "to change my mind."

The uproar ceased as abruptly as it had begun. For a moment in the stateroom there was the thud and rustle of three people searching again for soft spots in hard beds. Then there was no sound but the steady tramp, tramp of the man at the look-out, and the crowing of a cock that had waked in the chicken coop on deck.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH MEGGY FIGHTS HER FIRST BATTLE

ANY ninny," said Ewan, "might have known that Veronica wouldn't come, but I'll swear," rage and grief were in his voice, "nobody in the round world could have told that she'd send *you* in her place."

"She didn't send me," returned Meggy steadily, for the third time. "I came myself. She knew nothing about it."

Ewan was flushed and scowling. He seemed in his anger to tower almost to the ceiling of the cabin. Meggy, feeling smaller and paler than ever, held her shoulders back and her head high, and looked straight into Ewan's hot eyes. She swayed a little, for she had eaten nothing since yesterday noon. While the rest had breakfasted this morning she had pretended to sleep, in order that the boat might get as far down the Forth as possible before she was found out. She had lain with her face to the wall and her eyes shut until Miss Cameron came for the second time to let down the half door and look at her.

"She has a fair white skin and finely set eyes," that lady had said thoughtfully, "but beyond that she's surely not the beauty we have heard so much about.

And she is a strangely determined sleeper. Miss Keith. Miss Keith. You must wake up and save Mr. MacNeill from perishing of impatience. Miss *Keith!* It is your wedding day!"

Meggy had imagined that she would come face to face with Ewan upon the deck of the *Bachelor of Leith*, and that they would thresh the matter out alone—a scene which would have been painful enough. What happened was even worse. They met in the crowded cabin, and the captain, the supercargo, Miss Cameron, and Jenny, and the two little boys were all there to see and hear, spellbound and expectant as a crowd at a play. The Reverend James Murray alone was missing, and almost before Meggy had had time to be grateful for his absence, he appeared, Bible in hand, and started to speak from the doorway.

"Now if these two young persons are ready," he said without preface, "I'll marry them at once."

Six voices, in varying degrees of loudness and determination, were prompt in informing him that the two young persons were emphatically not ready. A belated shrill squeal from Alexander Cameron, "He has the wrong girl," made the supercargo guffaw and Ewan flush darker than before. Only Miss Cameron sat silent; she was hemming a pocket handkerchief, and from time to time she looked up with an inscrutable expression in her eyes.

Ewan sawed the air impatiently with his right hand, and spoke directly to the captain, as if he had brushed

away all the others, including Meggy, like a cloud of sticky, buzzing flies.

"You'll have to turn back and put her off," he said. "I won't take her with me."

"Turn back and put her off!" The captain rubbed his ear in perplexity. "I don't see how that's possible, sir. We're late as it is. We have goods on board for the colonies and a load of emigrants, and I can fancy what the owner of this boat would say if I put back and lost three days because one passenger didn't suit another. You contracted for a young lady," he warmed to the logic of it, "and there's the young lady. I can't lose three days and a deal of money because she doesn't happen to suit. I couldn't say what's the law of the case, sir, but that's the sense of it."

"But this is *not* the young lady I contracted for," protested Ewan indignantly. "This is another young lady altogether. She introduced herself onto this boat masquerading as Miss—as another lady, and she ought to be sent home where she belongs."

The supercargo rose and lounged over to the captain. He was a thick-set, ugly man with an untidy wig, and though actually he touched no one he gave the effect of shouldering them all aside. His function on board ship was to have charge of the goods that were being exported, and he evidently felt that it gave him a right to a finger in every pie.

"And if the young gentleman," he drawled, "doesn't

want to pay the passage of the young lady that isn't the young lady he contracted for—that's another side of the case, eh? Did you think about that, Sister, when you came a-masqueradin'?"

"Don't call me Sister," said Meggy indignantly. "Nobody has to pay my passage. I provide for——"

"It isn't a question of paying her passage," said Ewan to the captain, ignoring the supercargo and Meggy alike, "if that were all. But what am I to do with her after we get there?"

"If you were willing to pay her passage both ways," said the captain, "I could bring her back on my next trip."

"But I can pay for myself!" If they would only listen to her! "I would not allow anyone to——"

"I knew"—the hoarse voice of Mrs. Jenny from the corner—"I knew frae the firrst moment I laid eyes on her that yon was a prepostor."

"Of course," went on the captain thoughtfully, "now that you've brought up the matter of paying, if you wanted to pay for all the expense and trouble of going back, perhaps it might be done. Though it's against my judgment."

They were talking over Meggy's head as if she were not there, disposing of her future without hearing what she had to say. She put her hand on the minister's sleeve. "Oh, please," she implored him, "make them listen to me for just a minute!"

Mr. Murray looked at her disapprovingly; then, as if softened by something he read in her eyes, he held up his hand. "Gentlemen," he said, "it will do no harm to give the child a hearing."

Meggy hastened to take advantage of the moment of silence.

"I'm not a child," she said earnestly. "I am fifteen, and I can pay my own passage and take care of myself. I don't want to be a burden to anyone, and I won't bother anyone. I only wanted to get away from—from where I was and go to America. My cousin could not come as she promised, and I came in her place, because it was so easy. I did not have to engage passage or find my own way to the ship. I didn't think anybody would mind except Ewan—and *you* know, Ewan, that I couldn't possibly have kept Veronica from coming if she had wanted to come."

She looked from one to the other of the little circle of men around her. Their eyes showed skepticism, amusement, annoyance. Nothing she said seemed to touch them. "If you put me back," she cried, and she knew that she was talking wildly, "I won't stay there. I'll run away again and come on the next ship."

She searched with frantic fingers for the little bag that hung under the front of her frock; found it; thrust out her hand with a ruby flashing on the open palm. "I can pay for myself!" she repeated "See!"

Everyone was startled. Mrs. Jenny craned her neck and snorted; the boys gasped. The captain took the gem in his blunt fingers and held it to the light. The minister, after a glance at its fire, put his hand on Meggy's shoulder.

"My child," he said gently, "how have you come by such a jewel as that?"

"It was my father's." If only they would go away and let her talk to Ewan alone!

"Oh, it's hers all right," put in Ewan gloomily. "Her father was MacIntosh of Inverdruie."

"Ah! Now here is some light on the situation." Mr. Murray for the moment was taking charge of the whole affair, which, with the advent of the ruby, had suddenly become important. "You are acquainted with this young lady, then."

"Yes, I know her well. But that only makes it worse. She has no right to be *here*, and I feel the responsibility of getting her home again."

"This is a good stone, young lady," said the captain, with more amiability than he had so far displayed, "or I don't know a ruby from a piece of cheese. Now if you've got a stone like that, you've got folks that will be interested in seeing you back safe——"

"And raising the deuce of a row about it if she isn't put back," interpolated the supercargo.

"—and sound," continued the captain. He held the ruby up between his finger and thumb, squinted

through it, and dropped it reluctantly into Meggy's hands. "Now you've run away and had your fun and fooled this young gentleman. Hadn't I better take you back to your mamma?"

"Perhaps she'd rather go on with the wedding," the supercargo suggested with a wink.

Meggy felt her cheeks flame. All her most sensitive feelings were being dragged out and stamped on. The lonely, chilly bedroom in the Edinburgh land seemed to her for the first time a haven of quiet and peace. She clenched her hands hanging at her side against the folds of her dress, and lifted her chin a little more. "No," she declared, "I do not wish to marry Ewan. I will not be a burden or a mortification to him or to anybody else. I——"

"But, my child," it was the minister again, "what thought have you given to your people? You must consider their anxiety and their fear for you. We cannot live for ourselves alone."

Ewan had turned his back, and with his shoulders hunched and his hands in his pockets was staring fixedly at the stove.

"Nobody will miss me," said Meggy. "They'll scarcely know I've gone."

"Were your people unkind to you?"

Ewan whirled around. "No, they were kindness itself," he answered for her. "She lives with her aunt and uncle and she has for a cousin the most beautiful

girl God ever made. I can't see any reason for her leaving—when nobody asked her to."

Miss Cameron spoke. "Our beautiful cousins," she observed detachedly, "are seldom much comfort to us."

"Then why," continued Mr. Murray, passing over the last remark as irrelevant, "have you run away from your kin, to whom you owe so much, and forced yourself upon Mr. MacNeill in this very unmaidenly manner?"

"What I want to know is," piped up Willie Cameron, "Where is Miss Veronica Keith?"

There was an instant's silence in the cabin, then the supercargo slapped his knee. "She changed her mind," he roared.

Ewan's ears turned red. "All this talk," he said furiously, trying vainly to keep his voice steady, "is neither here nor there. All the time we're sailing away from Edinburgh. The point is, Captain Slack, are you going to take Miss MacIntosh home where she ought to be, or are you going to let her go on to America?"

The captain hesitated. "What about her folks? Are they liable to raise a rumpus and cause anybody trouble if she gets away?"

"They'll never care, Ewan, and you know it!"

"No," admitted Ewan unwillingly.

"Well," said the captain judicially, "we're a'ready twelve hours out and time lost is money lost. Since the little lady can pay for her passage, and being as

her folks ain't liable to object, I don't see just how *I* can stop her from going."

Meggy's knees shook. She leaned against a chair for support, and the wood of it felt cold and sticky to her tense fingers. Was the battle over? Had she fought for her right to freedom, and won?

"Your point of view, Captain Slack," said Mr. Murray, "is—perhaps naturally—a commercial one. Mr. MacNeill feels, and I feel, that our responsibility does not end with the voyage. What will be the fate of a young girl who possesses a valuable ruby and nothing else, alone and unprotected in that land of savages and rough men? We must consider that."

"That's it exactly," said Ewan. "Look here, Meggy. What are you going to do when you get there? You don't expect me to take care of you, do you?"

The question and the tone in which it was put roused Meggy to sudden anger. She tried to remind herself that, as she was battered and hurt, so too was Ewan. She knew that his pride must be cruelly wounded. He had been made ridiculous in the eyes of other men. Had she been able, Meggy would have spared him—and herself—the humiliation of this public scene. But he, she thought, was sparing her nothing.

"No, thank you, Ewan," she flared. "I do not expect you to take care of me, though I'm humbly grateful to you for your chivalrous attitude! When I get to Wilmington I shall go straight to Flora MacDonald, and

until I reach her I'm asking no one to take care of me."

The supercargo slapped his leg again. It would be no grief to me, thought Meggy looking at him coldly, if you slapped it altogether off. "Blessed if she ain't got it all planned out!" he chuckled. "She's got gumption, that girl!"

Miss Cameron rose. "Flora MacDonald," she repeated. "That is true; she did go out to America. Now that is rather practical. She has a number of children. No doubt she'd be glad of a Scots lass to help her. Well, Meggy-Veronica, whatever your name is, you are welcome to your bunk in my stateroom. You are vastly better off than I thought you were. I thought your head was full of romantic nonsense, but you have your feet square on the ground. Between marriage with a handsome young beau who has his fortune still to make and single freedom under the wing of a Flora MacDonald, there's small question in the choosing, to my mind. And that young beauty, your cousin, who changed her mind—I wager her feet are on the ground, too."

She left the cabin with a rustling of skirts. The play was over. The little boys had climbed up the companionway to the deck, and the captain and the supercargo now followed them. The Reverend Murray retreated to a chair behind the stove.

Exhausted, tremulous, Meggy at last faced Ewan alone.

"Well, you've made a monkey out of me," he said grimly. "I hope the sight is agreeable to you."

Meggy longed wildly for a large comfortable lap, for a wide soft shoulder on which to sob out her over-full heart. She had had a nurse like that once, when she was very small. "Ye're a wheen bit overwrought," old Tibbie would say, "and ye're weary and nae doubt ye're hungry. The worrld canna be sae black as a' that." With the memory, Meggy's courage slid back. I *am* tired, she told herself firmly, and I haven't touched food for hours. But I've won, and I have a world in front of me.

"I'm sorry, Ewan," she said. "But Veronica wasn't coming anyhow, and I wanted to go to Flora MacDonald."

Ewan looked at her as if he were seeing a stranger.

"'Mild, meek, mansuet Merg'rit,'" he said at length. "*Oh* my Lord."

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH MEGGY HASTENS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

SKY and sea were gray; a draggling rain fell; it was raw and damp. The captain assured his passengers that they were having a smooth passage, and they, sitting in chairs lashed to the floor, lest they should cascade across the cabin into the stove, and striving to drink out of cups that rattled against their teeth, wondered what, if this were smooth, a rough passage could be!

Miss Cameron was sick. Still and patient she lay on her bunk and suffered. Ewan was sick. He, also, retired to his stateroom, now and then emerging green-faced for a breath of air on deck. He was too miserable even to notice Meggy. Mr. Murray was sick. He stayed all of the time on deck, staggering against the piercing wind. Sometimes a wave would wash over the deck, buffeting and drenching him; then he would go down to the cabin to steam by the stove. The smell of wet woollen added to the odor of the gin that Mrs. Jenny took to keep warm would send Meggy and the little boys scrambling up the companionway.

Except for occasional qualms, Meggy herself was full of health and zest. She found every hour of the long gray days interesting. She was busy; she was needed. Without her the invalids would have fared badly indeed. It was Meggy who kept them warm and as comfortable as possible, Meggy who by dint of commands and coaxing, nagging and praise, goaded the unwilling Jenny into making every day the chicken broth that seemed to be the only thing they could eat.

"Drap, drap, drap," Jenny would grumble. "Water wearin' oot a stane. Ou ay, I'll dae't, but gi'e me time."

The little boys were constantly at Meggy's heels. She mothered them and played with them, told them stories of the Bonny Prince, and listened eagerly to their accounts of America. Willie had been six years old when he came away, and there was nothing that, when pressed, he could not remember about America. Bears and hunting, fishing, vast palatial houses with columns and gardens, boats with awnings, mill wheels and screeching saws, horses and Negroes wandered in and out of his tales, and to all of them Alexander, who had been a babe of two, would add solemnly:

"Aye, that is so. That's what I remember, too."

Indians, said Willie, were in the back country, but Negroes were everywhere. "Everybody had a nigger servant just for himself." He remembered how he used to ride under the pine trees on his pony with a colored groom in attendance. And then he would fall to boast-

ing of the things he would do when he reached home, the accomplishments he would have to show his father, the surprises he would give him.

"When he sees how I can fence," he would cry, "he'll be struck dumb! He doesn't know I'm taller than the other lads, or how I fought Davy Ferguson——"

"You do right well for a lad your age," said Meggy, cutting him short. "I hope you are as good at the Latin as you are with your fists. Will the honeysuckle be blossoming in Wilmington when we reach there?"

Of the two, little Alexander was her favorite. He was so small and wistful, so eager to be and to do exactly what Willie was and did. But sometimes, when Willie was not by, he would cuddle up to Meggy, and one night when he was all choked up with a cold and his hands were hot, he let her sing him to sleep. Very softly, so that Willie should not hear and be disgusted, she sang the lullaby which her old nurse Tibbie used to sing to her:

"'I've placed my cradle
On yon holly-top,
And aye as the wind blew
My cradle did rock,'"

she crooned, while the wind lashed against the ship and the sails rattled and a coat on a peg swung out and back again.

"'And hush-a-ba baby,
Oh, ba-lilly-loo,
And hee and ba-birdie,
My bonny wee doo!'"

"I'b dot a baby," Alexander protested drowsily, but he went to sleep with her finger clutched tight in his hot little paw. He *was* a baby, Meggy thought, looking down at him, and the knowledge that he depended on her, even a little, loosed the bands of loneliness around her heart.

Besides the life in the cabin there was another and a different life on board the *Bachelor of Leith*. The hold was full of emigrants, Highlanders, for the most part, who because of high rents and the cost of bread were hastening across the Atlantic in search of better things. The first day that Meggy saw them she was amazed. She had heard that there were emigrants on board, but she had not imagined that the ship could hold so many. It was a cold gray day with a mizzling rain, and they had climbed out of the hold and swarmed over the deck. Young men and women, chiefly, they were, with a score or more of children, and a few—a very few—old men. Blue-lipped and pinched they all were, shivering with cold and hunger. They clustered together by families and groups, and they talked of the home they had left and the land they were going to. Some were hopeful and eager; some were bitterly homesick; many were dull

with cold and bad food and the discomforts of their quarters.

They slept in the hold, in rows, each on what blankets or rags he could muster. It was dark and airless and dank. Wind-swept and wave-swept as the deck might be, they were better off here where there was light and air and room to move about. Neck beef or pork (New England pork which, being on its third voyage across the ocean, was almost uneatable), oatmeal, moldy biscuits, and potatoes were rationed out to them from the ship's stores, with a measure of brackish water And for these miserable quarters, this wretched food, many of them had mortgaged the next four or five or six years of their lives. Unable to pay for their passage, many of the younger men and women had bound themselves to the master of the ship. When they arrived in the colony their time would be sold to whoever would buy it, and they, who were going to America in search of freedom, would be indentured servants. Six years of slavery, they seemed to feel, was small enough price to pay for a lifetime in a free land.

"And when my time is up," one of them told Meggy in the careful English of the person who has grown up knowing only Gaelic, "my master will be obliged to give me a suit of clothes and some land and a gun, and I shall have my start in life. It is only five years to pay. In the islands I should work my heart out on another's land and in the end have the rent raised again. You

would need to be harvesting silver pieces, not oats, to get enough to pay the rent and have some over for yourself," he finished bitterly.

Meggy soon knew most of them. A few were Highland gillies, ignorant, clumsy, and bewildered, but for the most part they were small farmers going "in hopes of better bread" or "to find a better way of doing." There was Robert McNichol and his wife Jean, so young that their eight-year-old daughter, Annabel, seemed more like a sister. There was a Walter Cunningham, a clerk in Edinburgh, going out to seek his fortune. There were the Campbells, mother and father and six children, none of whom knew any language but the Gaelic. They were doomed to be separated while the father, Robert, bound himself over to a master to pay the balance of their passage, bound himself for double time that his wife might be spared such slavery. There was William McMurchie, an old man, broken by the years, whose sons were doing well enough in North Carolina to send for him. For their sake he went, for he was an old man and lame, so that it was "indifferent to him in what country he died." There was Allan Stewart who had been a lieutenant in Fraser's Regiment and somehow had fallen on evil days. Farmers, tailors, weavers, carpenters, servants had turned their faces toward America. A tall, gawky lass from the Highlands seemed to be the butt of many a Gaelic joke or a quieter glance of amusement or scorn. She

had black hair bound with a blue snood and wide-open blue eyes; her dress was ragged and her feet in all the cold were bare. She kept apart from the others and scarcely seemed to notice them.

"Yon's Tibbie McNabb," said old William McMurchie, when Meggy asked him about her. "She's a simple thing. She's twenty year auld and she's a' by hersel'. Ye ken hoo they spier ye questions when ye get on a ship—thae men frae the Customs Hoose in Edinburgh —whaur dae ye come frae and whaur are ye ganging and hoo auld arre ye, and what's your quality or station and sic like? Aweel, when they spiered Tibbie what was she ganging for, she opened up her big eyes surprised-like an' said, 'Tae get a husband.' Eh, sirs, the men did laugh. Oh, I ken there's many a lass ganging to America for juist that, but the maist o' them will say 'Tae be a comfort tae ma mither,' or 'Tae keep hoose for ma brither,' but Tibbie was simple eneuch tae open her mouth and let the truth pop out. Puir lass, her best husband-hunting years will be o'er afore she's free to marry gin onybody spiers her. She spent a' her siller for claes and she hadna eneuch left to pay the captain. She'll be a bound servant to someone for five or sax years."

Tibbie was too frugal to wear on shipboard the clothes that she had bought at such a sacrifice. They were stowed away in her box, the gown and the kerchief and the shoes. Meggy won her confidence and was told

about them. A green-stuff damask gown it was, with scarlet callimanco cuffs.

"Poor thing," said Meggy to Miss Cameron, "she will look ganglier than ever dressed up in green and scarlet."

A succession of clear bright days with a calmer sea brought the sick ones up on deck. They wrapped themselves in coats and mufflers to the eyes and sat in the lee of some hogsheads of water, and rejoiced in the crisp sunshine and the almost stationary horizon.

Ewan, who had been so completely blotted out by his illness, was his gay assertive self again. He treated Meggy in the old, teasing, slightly condescending way that she adored. It was not in his cheerful nature to bear a grudge, and beyond that, Meggy had been too good to him in his illness not to merit his gratitude. So he walked on the deck with her and talked to the emigrants she had told him about.

"I wish to see Tibbie especially," he said. "Perhaps she'll be setting her cap at me."

"How am I entered in the Customs House records, Ewan?" asked Meggy, thinking of the questions that Tibbie had had to answer.

"Oh," said Ewan after a moment's puzzling, "I see. You're Miss Veronica Keith—Edinburgh—age eighteen—occupation, spinster—quality or station, lady—purpose, pleasure—destination, Wilmington—ship, *Bachelor of Leith*."

Meggy nodded. "Except for the name and age, it fits very well."

"Hump! There's one questionable item. I doubt you're no lady—you've overmuch determination."

There had been, since the scene in the cabin, no mention between them of Meggy's coming. She thought he was referring to it now and that, deep down in his heart, he had not quite forgiven her.

"I've been wanting to tell you, Ewan, that I'm sorry to have been a plague to you. Veronica wasn't coming and I never thought how it would mortify you if I took her place."

"Never fret about that, Meggy. Since Veronica couldn't—or wouldn't—come, it is indifferent to me who comes in her place. I was thinking at first that I wouldn't know what to do with you, but you're not the lass I thought you were, Meggy. You've more spirit than anyone would guess from your looks. Not that you're ill-looking, either, especially when Veronica's not about. Dod, I believe if you had some other clothes you'd be tolerably neat. That blue is too purplish for you. If I were you, when we get to Wilmington I'd buy some other clothes."

"A green-stuff damask gown, I suppose," said Meggy crushingly, "with scarlet callimanco cuffs."

That evening in the cabin was a jolly one. Everybody was there, well and cheerful, and there was story-telling and singing. Mr. Murray, with apologies

for his subject, told the tale of Major Weir who lived in the West Bow in Edinburgh (Meggy had passed through it a thousand times) and who every night went riding with the devil in his coach and four. Ewan played on his flute, a French song first, and then the catchy "*Dod a ah 'iarruidh.*" ("Dod, Meggy, I might have remembered that night that Veronica cannot carry a tune!") Meggy and the little boys did a Highland fling, whereat Ewan was moved to quote from a Scottish ballad:

> "'Meg up and walloped o'er the green,
> Fu' brawly could she busk it.'"

The captain sang, "How happy are we when the winds blow abaft," a loud and nautical ditty that reverberated against the cabin walls. Miss Cameron, when pressed, refused to perform, saying, "No, I shall be audience. There is nothing so dispiriting to performers as to be without an audience. Meggy-Veronica, sing that little lullaby you sang to Alexander one night."

Meggy took pity on Alexander, who was ready to hide in the corner for shame, and sang instead a little Gaelic song that Mr. MacPherson had taught her. Everybody liked it. Willie Cameron rose and made her his best bow, saying gallantly:

"We thank you, *Crochallain mavourgne*"—entirely unaware of the fact that he was calling her the favorite cow of one Allan.

The evening ended with a burst of laughter. It was the last time for some days that anyone aboard the *Bachelor of Leith* had the slightest desire to laugh. A gale began that night. The ship tossed and dipped, to the accompaniment of the howling of the wind and the rattling of the shrouds. There was a great squawking in the hen coops on deck as they broke from their moorings and were swept overboard. Everybody was ill and frightened.

In the morning the captain spoke cheerily enough, but he sent the ship's carpenter to put the deadlights up. With the heavy shutters on the cabin windows cutting off all light, gloom settled down within. A candle made fast to the table gave a light that was scarcely less dismal than total darkness. The roar of the storm, the sound of the waves washing over the deck, the noise of the snapping sails drowned out all sound inside. More than one wave poured into the cabin and from there into the staterooms. The men and Willie Cameron stayed on deck in spite of the danger there, and Meggy and Miss Cameron and Mrs. Jenny, with little Alexander, were left in the cabin. Ewan, coming down to get warm, reported that the hatches had been battened down and that the emigrants were shut up in the hold. Meggy realized with horror what that meant: the dark cramped space with no light and no heat, water pouring down at intervals, nothing but raw potatoes and moldy biscuit to eat.

All day long the ship rode the waves, rising till it seemed that it must fall over backward, pausing for a terrible instant before it pitched forward with a plunge that seemed to shock every timber. It was no longer safe to stay in the cabin. Waves poured in; chairs, joint-stools, pewter plates were hurled from their places as the boat rolled from one side to the other. The men were all on deck helping the sailors, whose hands were already bleeding from the pulling on the wet ropes. Miss Cameron and Meggy went to their beds; the floor of their stateroom was so inundated that Mrs. Jenny's bed there was ruined. She had to go and bunk in with the little boys.

The night was endless. The hogsheads of water lashed on deck were swept loose and with a terrifying crash rolled over the deck into the water. Meggy thought of the emigrants. Now and then when there was a moment's lull she could hear from the steerage the groan of an old man or a child's high shriek of terror.

Early in the morning Ewan came down to see how they were getting on and to bring them wine and biscuits. In the dim light of the candle he held he looked white and exhausted. He had a great purple bruise on his forehead where he had been thrown against something by the force of the wind; his hands were raw, his clothes torn and stained with sea water.

"We are in God's hands," said Miss Cameron sol-

emnly. "He alone can quell this awful tumult and bring us safely to our destination."

"The sails are ripped to tatters," said Ewan, and as he spoke the boat shivered and plunged, knocking him against the door and putting out the candle. A moment later a fresh wave rustled in along the passageway, poured through the lower part of the door, and swashed against their bunks. Ewan raised his voice. "But our mast is still erect. The captain says he has been in greater gales than this and come safely out."

Meggy had been feeling too cold and ill to care what happened. Now, warmed by the wine, she raised herself on her elbow and asked through stiff lips that tasted salty:

"What about the boys? And the emigrants?"

"The boys are safe. They are still in bed, although they're heartily tired of it. I don't know how the emigrants are faring. The sea is washing over them all the time, and like us they have no fire."

"Poor souls," sighed Miss Cameron, "their homes forever behind them and nothing but uncertainty in the future, terror and misery in the present. What of Jenny? Are the lads quite famished?"

It was strange, thought Meggy, how calmly they could talk when all their world was standing first on one ear and then on the other, when death was lurking beneath the crest of the next wave, ready to swoop upon them. Yet it was not fear that made Meggy's

teeth chatter, but an acute misery of discomfort: the cold that pierced her through and through, the unspeakable dampness, the hunger and the sickness, the long hours of tumult in the dark. And yet she had no wish to be safely back in Edinburgh on the sixth floor of a land in the Cannongate. I'm on my way to America, she told herself with an inner exultation.

Gradually the storm subsided. They made their way to the cabin where they managed to build a fire and cook some food. After another day the deadlights came down and once again they had light and air.

Meggy lost no time in going on deck. The air was cold and fresh; the sun was sparkling on the tossing water; a thin white moon looked almost transparent in the blue sky. The deck itself was littered with broken barrels and pieces of rigging. Equipped with coarse needles and the leathern pads that went across their palms and served as thimbles, the sailors were busily mending sails and singing as they sewed.

> "'Blow, ye winds, I long to hear ye,
> Blow, bullies, blow!
> Oh, blow to-day and blow to-morrow
> Blow, my bully boys blow!'"

"It appears to *me*," said Willie Cameron, "that there's been quite enough blowing on this navigation."

The emigrants, overjoyed at the release from their prison, were again on deck. They were paler and more

bedraggled than ever, but, miraculously, all had escaped serious injury. Tibbie had been convinced from the beginning that the boat was going to the bottom, and she still maintained that danger was not past, only deferred.

"There was a meenister on board," she explained in a low voice, jerking her head toward Mr. Murray, who was talking with the supercargo. "It's no' canny to go voyaging with a meenister. I knew frae the instant I saw him that we'd have ill luck on this trip."

"Look!" cried Meggy. "Sea gulls!"

There was a flock of them—broad-winged white birds dipping and swooping above the ship, wheeling into the sky, harshly crying.

"Some say," observed Tibbie, "that gulls are the souls of fishermen who ha'e died at sea."

Meggy had often seen the sea gulls circling over Edinburgh. For a second the gray, sky-ey city flashed across her mind's eye. These were birds of another land.

"Can you smell the pines, Meggy?" said Ewan, coming up to her.

He wore his greatcoat and a fresh stock at his throat. A ruffle fell about his bandaged hand, his hair was neatly dressed. Waggling his head in the old way, he walked the deck as if he owned it.

"We'll be hearing the surf on the Frying Pan Shoals soon," he said. "And after that—North Carolina."

Late that night Meggy heard it, when everything

was still except the creaking of the ship and the slap of the water; woke and heard the steady crash and rumble of waves breaking on a long sand bar. It sounded close in her ears, like the noise within a conch shell. It ebbed away as the wind eddied, and poured back again: a long roar of challenge and of warning, a murmur—Meggy was drifting back to sleep again—a surging murmur of promise.

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH MEGGY ARRIVES AT LAST IN WILMINGTON

THEY found spring in Wilmington. The boat docked at dusk, when blue shadows were stealing out of the great magnolia trees and the live oaks in Wilmington gardens, but Meggy sniffed spring in the air. After the long days and nights of sea travel, here was her goal at last, swathed in shadows, sending forth only a faint perfume to tell her of its strangeness and its beauty.

The river was full of craft: big boats, small ones, great flat barges, and slender canoes. About the wharf were men and shouting and confusion. The emigrants pressed close to the rail, silent and sad. Willie and Alexander searched the faces of the crowd below, looking for their father.

"Do you think he'll be here to meet us, Meggy?" they asked again and again. "Will he come to meet us?"

He had not come, but he had sent Mr. Clayton, a stout and solid merchant, in his place. He came aboard, explained himself to Miss Cameron, and was introduced to Meggy and Ewan.

"Servant, ma'am," he said politely to Meggy. "Servant, sir. Your brother," he continued to Miss Cameron, "has been detained upon his plantation. He sent an express to me bidding me meet you and carry you to my house. He begs you will stay there until he can send a conveyance for you and the lads. You, sir, I believe, are the young gentleman whom Mr. Campbell is expecting. You are to lodge with him. I make no doubt he will be here any moment."

"And Meggy?" said Ewan in a low voice.

"Miss MacIntosh is with me," stated Miss Cameron.

"Oh, surely, surely," agreed Mr. Clayton. "We shall be honored to have her with us. My daughters will take care of her."

Meggy, who had been listening with interest, gave a sigh of relief and identified her meager luggage. It was immediately taken in charge by a grinning Negro boy who had great white teeth in a face almost fearsomely black. A bigger fellow, equally black, piled the heavier pieces of Miss Cameron's into a barrow. A mulatto woman attended with a lantern. The little group was ready to start. Ewan drew Meggy aside.

"I'll see you in the morning," he said. "You aren't frightened, are you, Meggy?"

"No," said Meggy simply, "are you?"

He turned and strode away in a most dignified manner. A moment later Meggy saw a man stop him and the two shake hands.

It developed that Mr. Clayton had not meant his promise to "carry" them to his house to be taken literally. By the light of the swinging lantern they made their way on foot along the dim unpaved streets. To Meggy's amazement she found the land as unstable as the sea; it rose to meet her lifted foot and sank away when she would step down. She staggered dizzily. Overhead the moon struggled out of a cloud and frosted with silver the broad leaves of a tall evergreen and the slope of a roof.

Mr. Clayton began to point out places of interest. "The town hall," he said of a black shape in the darkness, and later, "The courthouse." He evidently searched his mind for things attractive to the lads, and finally offered them: "We have a ducking stool at the foot of Market Street, and two fire engines."

They passed a brick house set close to the ground, with candlelight shining from its windows, and Meggy shamelessly tried to see what manner of people lived within, but all she got was a glimpse of a white mantel and a red fire glowing on the hearth below.

"On your right," designated Mr. Clayton, "the jail. In among the trees across the way is St. James's, said by some to be the finest church in the colony. We have the opportunity of hearing preaching there eighteen Sundays in the year. We turn here, if you please, Miss Cameron."

Mr. Clayton's house was, like himself, solid, sub-

stantial, polite. A flight of stone steps led up from the street; pillars rising overhead seemed to indicate a second porch above the first one; the walls were of red brick.

At the first sound of footsteps on the stair the door opened and a stout negress appeared, holding high a lighted candle. After her came Mrs. Clayton and the two daughters. Meggy liked Mrs. Clayton at once for her kindness and her cordiality, but her chief interest was in the two girls. Their names were Alice and Pherebee, and they were like two bright butterflies. Both had brown eyes and cream-colored skin, short straight noses (Meggy noticed noses), and full red lips. Alice was the taller, the more assured; Pherebee's brown hair curled on her shoulders and she had a dimple in her chin. They laughed charmingly, and their voices, when they talked, were different from any Meggy had ever known. They spoke softly, lingering on words that Meggy would have clipped, slurring the r's that Meggy was accustomed to hearing reverberate, playing with vowel sounds. They returned Willie Cameron's gallant bow with deep mocking courtesies, and laughed at solemn Alexander. They scolded the servants, and smiled cordially at Meggy.

"Carry Miss MacIntosh up to your room, Alice an' Pherebee," commanded Mrs. Clayton—and her voice was like theirs—"an' I'll have Cuffey to bring up her bag. Now don't you all get to talkin' up there. Supper

is goin' to be ready soon. Miss Cameron, if you'll come with me, ma'am."

To Meggy, after the weeks of cramped quarters on the *Bachelor of Leith*, the chamber that Alice and Pherebee shared was royally spacious. It held a big field bed draped with chintz, a chest of drawers with an oval mirror hanging over it, a washstand equipped with china dimly patterned with red, and sundry slat-backed chairs. On one side the roof sloped steeply down and the windows were deep-set in it. On the other a small fireplace was built across a corner.

"For weeks," said Meggy, "I've been sleeping with two others in a room just six feet long and scarce five feet across."

Now that they were all three alone together the two Claytons had less to say. They perched side by side on the high bed and watched Meggy intently.

"You've come *all* the way from Edinburgh!" said Pherebee at last. *All* as she said it was almost *owl*. "I suppose it's very gay there."

Meggy smiled, seeing suddenly the reason for their silence. They were a little in awe of her because she had come from Edinburgh. "It wasn't for me," she said frankly. "My cousin Veronica, who is beautiful, was very gay. She was always going to routs and balls and concerts. But I was too young. And besides," she added carelessly, "nobody wanted me to go."

It was too dim and far away to hurt her now, that

forlorn and lonely time in Edinburgh. She gave herself up to the luxury of washing her face in hot fresh water and drying it on a soft towel.

Alice seemed to revive. "It is tolerable gay in Wilmington," she declared. "Or it was, until the Committee of Safety forbade balls and card parties."

Meggy was folding the towel. "Why did they do that?" she asked.

"Didn't you know?" said Pherebee. "Why, things have come to a shocking pass between the colonies and the King. They've landed English troops in Boston, and some say that Governor Martin here is preparing to rouse the slaves to revolt against their masters. It may even come to war. It is not time for balls and cards." A warning look from Alice stopped her. "Of course. I forgot for a minute that you were fresh from Scotland. It may be," she added politely but with evident skepticism, "that the King will see the light and do justly by his subjects in the colonies."

Meggy, feeling herself in a free land, voiced the sentiment that hitherto she had shared, and then most secretly, only with Mr. MacPherson.

"I have small love myself," she said, "for the House of Hanover."

At supper Meggy sat between Pherebee and Willie Cameron. The table, candlelighted, was laden with savory dishes, and the black servants kept passing more In spite of herself, Meggy drew back a little

when the Negroes passed near her. They were so black and strange; she did not want them to touch her. She was too tired and too bewildered by the new scenes, new faces, new voices to eat very much, but she tasted of the baked hen, and a sweet hot golden vegetable that was new to her, and drank a little coffee.

"Take two biscuits and butter them while they're hot," whispered Pherebee.

Sausage and boiled rice, stewed fruit, syllabub, and pies—Meggy had never seen so much food. Willie Cameron, fresh from the meager and unappetizing diet of the *Bachelor of Leith*, ate till his face was scarlet. Alexander leaned back in his chair, replete. It was late when at length the company rose from the table.

"The lads must go to bed at once," pronounced Miss Cameron, "and I fancy Miss MacIntosh would be glad to do likewise. Even adventurous and determined spirits like hers require the kindly offices of sleep."

Alice and Pherebee carried her off. Alice, sitting at dinner between Miss Cameron and Pherebee, had managed to learn something of Meggy's story and pass it on to her sister. They were both eager to hear more.

"We'll get into bed," said Pherebee, "and then we'll talk."

Meggy's night-rail was stiff from being washed in salt water and dried without ironing; she was ashamed of it when she brought it out of her bag. Alice lent her one of hers, a soft, fine gown of muslin, a linen

night cap with embroidered frills. The three climbed into the wide bed and blew out the candle. Outside the wind whispered in the trees.

"Now," said Alice, "begin."

For the first time in her life Meggy met girls of her own age on an equal footing. Her relationship with her cousin had been entirely one-sided, Veronica taking the stage, Meggy acting the humble but admiring audience. For the first time in her life she knew what it was to lie in bed and whisper and giggle with lasses who were as interested in her as she was in them. They had not seemed to notice that she was homely and unimportant. It was intoxicating. The coffee that she drank at supper was also having its effect; she was wide awake and had no wish to sleep.

Bit by bit, drawn out by a question here, made to go back there to gather up dropped threads, she told her little story, from the uncomfortable but beloved castle in the north to the storm at sea and the pounding of the surf upon the Frying Pan Shoals.

Pherebee raised herself on one elbow. "Flora MacDonald was here in Wilmington last August. There was a big ball in her honor. Everyone from the plantations came in for it, and everything was so gay."

Pherebee had actually seen Flora MacDonald—Meggy's Flora MacDonald. "Oh, tell me about her!" begged Meggy.

"She was beautiful. And so young-looking. She

danced like a girl. There was a crowd of people hovering about her every second. Her daughter Anne was beautiful, too; she had no lack of suitors. I hear she's since married a man old enough to be her father. But what Flora MacDonald enjoyed most about the ball was the attention that was paid to Anne."

"And Kingsburgh MacDonald—her husband—was a well-looking gentleman too," put in Alice. "Quiet in his manners, but black-haired and erect. He wore a blue coat and brown kilts. They've gone from here now—somewhere in the back country."

"The back country!" echoed Meggy in dismay.

"Oh, you must stay with us until you can find a way to go to her," said Pherebee.

Meggy put the thought away for the morrow; enough for her to-night that Flora MacDonald had actually danced at a ball in Wilmington and that Pherebee and Alice had seen her, and not only her, but her husband and daughter as well.

The moon, slipping down the sky, came in through the western window and shone on their faces. "You must not sleep with the moon in your face," said Meggy, thinking of Tibbie and her solemn little superstitions. "It's no' canny."

"It's no what?"

She told them about Tibbie MacNabb and her green-stuff damask gown, her hopes and the mockery of the emigrants.

"To get a husband!" repeated Pherebee. "Well, it's what we all want, really."

"*Pherebee!*" Alice had a special tone in which to convey with that one word the shock and disapproval which her younger sister not infrequently caused her to feel. "What an unmaidenly thing to say! And besides"—laughing—"it's no' canny. I don't think Meggy wants a husband! Nothing so tame for her. She is in search of adventure."

"Adventure for most females," persisted Pherebee, "means a soldier or a monstrous fine beau as a prize at the end. Perhaps this pretty Mr. MacNeill. What of it, Meggy? Are you blushing?"

"No," said Meggy calmly, "I'd scarce blush for Ewan. He has always loved my cousin Veronica."

"Oh, the one that stayed in Scotland. Ah, me, what a combination!" Pherebee sighed extravagantly. "Golden hair and blue eyes and long straight legs and a broken heart! 'Tis irresistible! I foresee that in a few days I shall have to go to Campbell & Hogg's to buy me a new tiffitie gown."

"He will be lost to someone else before you could get it made up," said Alice practically. "Why not put your faith in your yellow lutestring?"

"'Tis not to *wear* the dress, silly, 'tis to buy the goods from Mr. Campbell's well-looking new clerk. 'Would you suppose, Mr. MacNeill,' I should say, 'that the sky blue or the pale peach would become me

better?' And he, if he is the gentleman Meggy has represented him to be, would answer, 'Oh, Miss Pherebee, with your big brown eyes the pale peach sure!'"

She was sitting up in bed dramatizing the scene, bowing this way for Mr. MacNeill, that way for herself. Alice leaned over Meggy and pulled her down.

"*Pherebee!* You'll have Father dropping shoes!"

Meggy was puzzled. "But Ewan is not a clerk selling tiffities," she said in a scandalized whisper. "Ewan is come to make his fortune!"

"Is he not the gentleman who is come from Mr. Moncrief in Edinburgh with letters to Mr. Campbell? Well, then, he is to set about making his fortune in Mr. Campbell's store. It's not so shocking. Mr. Murray, who owns White Hill, a big plantation on the Northwest Branch, began as a clerk in the store of Duncan & Ancrum, and——"

Ewan a clerk in the firm of Campbell & Hogg, merchants! Here was another thought for Meggy to put aside for the morrow. Alice clapped her hand over a yawn. "We ought to go to sleep," she said.

Pherebee rolled over. Her soft lips, groping in the dark, gently touched Meggy's nose. Meggy felt the tears start in her eyes. No one had kissed her goodnight since she was a wee child.

"If we sleep spoon-fashion," murmured Pherebee, "it takes less room."

Accordingly they all turned on their left sides. The

moon fell softly on the posts of the bed. The air that came through the window was chilly and fragrant. Somewhere spring frogs kept up a shrill peeping. Meggy snuggled down under the Holland sheets and the homespun blankets. She felt Alice's warm breath fall softly on the back of her neck. A thousand new impressions came crowding in upon her drowsy brain. and she set them aside, too, for the morrow. To-night it was enough to be so far away, so warm, so happy.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH MEGGY MEETS A LAD FROM THE BACK COUNTRY

MEGGY was glad to be alone; she had so much to think about. Alice and Pherebee were busy with their household offices, washing the china cups that were too fine to be trusted to the Negro servants, helping Mrs. Clayton to dispense the day's supplies from the locked pantry, learning the housewifely ways that every lady who some day will have a place of her own to manage must know. They apologized to Meggy for leaving her to amuse herself, but Meggy was glad to be alone. She had been in Wilmington for four days now, and new impressions had come crowding in upon her until she was fairly dizzy, and she wanted to sit down quietly by herself and sort them out. She wanted to find out where she stood.

She dragged a rush-bottomed chair out onto the second-storey piazza and set it down in a sunshiny corner that was protected from the wind. Nothing in America that she had yet discovered seemed quite so good to her as the sunshine. It glorified everything, glinted on the dark thick leaves of the magnolia trees

and on the white sandy paths through the grass; glowed on yellow flowers in the garden and on the red brick walls of the houses, sparkled on the wind-riffled river at the foot of the streets. It warmed Meggy through and through as she had never been warmed before. The Highlands of her childhood had been gray and misty; in Edinburgh the sun had rarely penetrated into the tall gray buildings. Even the sky in Edinburgh, which had seemed all around one, filled with scudding clouds and the wheeling, shrieking sea gulls, had never been like the North Carolina sky. This was blue, day after day, a deep cool blue, bright as a flower or a bird's wing.

Ever since she was a little girl it had been Meggy's way, when events went a little too quickly for her, to go off quietly alone and take stock of herself. To-day it was hard to concentrate, for there was so much to see and to hear. Across the street among the scrub pines and oaks that fringed an empty plain a redbird flashed, and in a moment Meggy heard his clear insistent whistle. Almost at once there was an answering call, but not, as Meggy quickly recognized, from another redbird. In the center of the road, swinging along with a loose-jointed, easy stride, head thrown back and lips puckered, came a tall lad in leather breeches and a tight blue coat.

"The first thing is," said Meggy aloud, to collect her wandering thoughts, "I'm *here*."

Her voice must have reached the boy in the street below, for he looked up at the porch. His eyes were brown and set deep in his head, kind and thoughtful eyes with a twinkle in them. When he saw Meggy he hesitated for a moment and then doffed his hat. The wind ruffled up his dark hair and blew a lock of it across his forehead. Meggy smiled at him over the balustrade. "I wonder where you come from," she said to herself. "You've not the look of a Wilmingtonian." He strode along softly and easily, as if he were used to walking far in the forest, and his broad shoulders seemed about to burst the seams of his tight blue coat.

"The second thing is," Meggy reminded herself, as the lad turned the corner into Market Street: "What do I do next?"

Flora MacDonald was far away in the back country. Some said she was living in Cross Creek, the little trading town ninety miles up the Northwest Branch of the Cape Fear. Some said she had gone even beyond Cross Creek into the sand hills of Anson County. All agreed that Meggy must not venture forth in search of her until a suitable escort should be found. Meggy, dazed at first, was content to let older heads decide for her. It was not long, however, before she perceived that the finding of just the right escort would be a matter not of hours, but of days or perhaps even weeks. Then, aroused, and in truth rather appalled, she did what she told herself accusingly she should have done

at the very beginning—went in search of the emigrants. Several families among them, she knew, were planning to go up into the back country where their countrymen were and where land was available and cheap. Honest, earnest folk, ignorant though they might be, they would afford her protection to her journey's end. She was too late. Those who had had money for their passage had already gone; wasting no time in the city, they had pressed on, by boat, by wagon—if they could afford to pay out of their tiny capital for horses and carts—or on foot. Those who were left were those who must be bound over as servants that their passage money might be paid. For a day and a half, perhaps, the town had been full of newly arrived Highlanders, kilts and bare knees upon its wide unpaved streets, the Gaelic tongue upon its fragrant air; and then—suddenly—they were gone.

Meggy was greatly mortified. She had spoken so confidently of taking care of herself, and now, at the first test, she had failed. Everyone was anxious to console her. It would not be long, Mrs. Clayton said, before exactly the right person would be turning westward, and until then she was more than welcome in the Clayton house. Alice and Pherebee assured her that there was room for "two of her" in their bed and they refused to hear of her departing under a month or two at the very least. Miss Cameron, whose brother had sent a phaëton and four for her and the little

boys, promised that she would be back again in two weeks.

"I'll be coming to town to put the lads in school with Mr. Tate," she said, "and if you have not found a way to get to your Flora by then, Meggy-Veronica, I'll take you back to Holly Quarter with me, and among us, you and my brother and I, we'll devise a plan for you."

Alexander wept bitterly when he learned that Meggy was not to go with him then and there. His desolate howls gradually dwindled into hiccoughs as the phaëton moved slowly down the street. Touched by such obviously sincere grief, Meggy stood waving her handkerchief for a full minute after the carriage was out of sight.

On the same day the *Bachelor of Leith* also left Wilmington, left it more in anger than in grief, left without unloading a single one of the casks, the barrels, or the boxes about which the supercargo had been so solicitous, and the selling of which had been the real reason for its coming to Wilmington in the first place. As a protest against the unjust taxes levied by the King, the Province of North Carolina had entered into a non-importation agreement with the other colonies. Now, fulfilling the terms of the contract, the Wilmington Committee of Safety ordered Captain Slack to return whence he came without opening so much as a paper of needles. Angry but impotent, Captain Slack

could only do as he was told, and the *Bachelor of Leith*, catching the morning wind, moved silently down the Cape Fear. With her went the Reverend James R. Murray. Two days of Wilmington had convinced him that the colony was in a dangerously mutinous and rebellious frame of mind, and that his seeds of wisdom and piety would fall upon stony ground indeed.

Of all the company that had crowded eagerly to the rail as the ship docked at twilight four days before, only Meggy and Ewan and a few indentured servants were left in Wilmington.

"I'm here," said Meggy, summarizing, "and here I shall have to stay until some sober and respectable folk go into the back country—and it scarcely seems as if anyone of that kind does! But in the meantime, I've found good friends, and thanks to Ewan I have money. I think I had better buy some clothes."

Ewan it was who, haggling and bargaining with the captain of the *Bachelor*, had made him return to Meggy a fair number of joes and half-joes after the ruby earring had paid for her passage; Ewan who had forced him to pay in gold instead of paper. With gold coins in her purse and an emerald and another ruby in reserve, Meggy could still feel that she was traveling independently.

"The next thing," she said firmly to a spider that came sidling along the wooden balustrade, "is clothes."

The few things that she had been able to bring with

her in the little bag had been spoiled by the damp and the sea water on the voyage. Clothes she must have, as few and simple as might be, but something of her own, made just for her. Mrs. Clayton had given her some practical suggestions.

"In the back country," said that lady sensibly, "the women wear chiefly homespuns. You'll have ample time to fit yourself out with woollen gowns before winter, so if I were you I'd get right now chintz or callimanco for common and a lutestring or a tiffitie for best. You can hire Miss Effie Sprague to do the heavy sewing, and we'll all turn in and help, so it won't cost you over much in time or money, and you want to save as much of both as you can. That mantle of yours is right handsome, or will be when it is brushed and mended, and with some leather shoes and a chip hat for summer, you'll have a tolerable outfit."

The choosing of the materials would be a serious matter. Alice and Pherebee had promised to help, and Mrs. Clayton was insistent on her buying "good-wearing" stuff. It was exhilarating to Meggy, who for so long had been meekly accepting cast-offs and misfits, to reflect that however much advice she might receive as to color or quality, the decision rested with her alone. She tried to remember what Ewan had said about wearing blue.

Late that afternoon she was getting from him a repetition of that counsel. Alice and Pherebee had

promised to walk down to Campbell & Hogg's to look at the bolts of goods upon their shelves, but at the last minute they had been detained and Meggy had gone on alone, not to buy, but to look over the field. In attendance on her was the little black monkey, Cuffey, who minced along, several paces behind her, coming up at intervals to point out places of interest.

People looked curiously at Meggy, as people will in a place where the regular inhabitants are well known to each other and a new face is the subject of everyone's speculations. Meggy stopped to talk to one tiny girl who was making a garden with some pine cones and a sprig of pear blossoms, but she was a shy, frowning little thing whose entire vocabulary seemed to consist of a round "No-o-o," and so conversation languished.

Cuffey conducted her straight to the establishment of Messrs. Campbell and Hogg. It was a shock to find Ewan, the gay, the elegant, ensconced there behind the counter. He was as exquisitely dressed as ever, but the jauntiness, the cockiness that was Ewan had vanished. He sat on a high stool with a mammoth ledger spread out before him, his yellow head resting on one thin, long-fingered hand. The very ruffles drooping at his wrist had a despondent look.

The shop filled a long narrow room with a door at one end and a window at the other. As Meggy, pausing in the doorway, blotted out the view of river and moss-

hung live-oak tree and cast her shadow upon the blazing square of sunshine on the floor, Ewan looked up.

"Oh, Meggy! Come in. Welcome to the busy mart, the humming hive of business, the—oh, well, come in, child, and sit down." He brought her a wooden chair, and dusted it off with a piece of sacking which he threw casually into a corner. "Pray, madam," he rattled on with heavy-hearted liveliness, "what can I do for you? Anything from blond lace to barrel staves. A barrel of molasses, perhaps, or a keg of nails. Well, you little black imp, what are you grinning at?"

"Nossuh," protested Cuffey, rolling startled eyes till the white showed all the way around, "nossuh, ah ain' grinnin' at nuffin'. Hit's de sun in mah eyes makes me look dataway. Yessuh."

"I came," said Meggy, the importance of her errand melting as she saw Ewan's low spirits and knew the reason for them, "to look at chintz and Holland and lutestring, but it's no matter now, Ewan."

"Heigho!" said Ewan. "There's been a succession of females stepping through that door to-day to look at tiffities and lace and what you will—and get a glimpse of the new clerk into the bargain." He sat on the edge of the counter, swinging his shapely legs, one hand resting on his hip, the other busy in the ruffles at his throat. "There's a blue-flowered chintz up there, Meggy, 'twould be neat for morning, and a sea-green lutestring that's of a misty shade enough to do well

with your hair. There's apricot and plum-color tiffitie, too, but that's for some dark beauty—like Veronica. Dod, Meggy, at night I dream Veronica came with me, and I rouse up in a cold perspiration. How my lady would laugh—wouldn't she?—to see Ewan MacNeill, who bragged so on the fortune he was off to make, clerking in a shop in a straggling, raw little village in the wilderness." His voice was bitter and the corners of his mouth kept turning down.

Meggy was on her feet. "Oh, Ewan, 'tis not a wilderness at all, and no village! Look here." She drew him to the door. The sun, almost touching the pines and cypresses across the river, sent long shafts of light through the rigging of ships. "There's the river road out into the Atlantic Ocean and up into the back country. And there's a road from New Berne, and from Virginia and north beyond, and a road from Brunswick. And ships and men travel into Wilmington on these roads all the time. And all around the city there are big plantations—Mr. Clayton told me about them—where wealthy gentlemen live and come into town to see what is going on and to make their purchases. Everyone meets here, travelers and back-country people and planters. It's a young town, but it's growing. Why, Ewan, you mustn't be discouraged so soon. Men before you have started in shops and made their fortunes!"

"It's a bad time, Meggy. The town is a nest of Whigs.

And by the by, the people you are stopping with are hand in glove with the worst of them. You'd best keep your ears closed against the treason you'd be hearing there. What with their non-importation agreements—fancy sending back a shipload of goods they are in sore need of—and their signings of test oaths and their abolishing of parties and card playing, they'll have themselves fairly ruined soon, and there will be no fortune for anybody. I cannot see what the King is about, dilly-dallying and shilly-shallying with insurrection! 'Tis a firm hand that these farmers want. It's growing dark. There will be no more people in the shop today. I'll close up and then I'll walk home with you. Up with you there, Cæsar, and make fast those shutters!"

The sun had set when they came out of the building and started along Water Street. The crimson afterglow was reflected in the quiet river.

"You *would* come, Meggy," said Ewan. "You could have been in Edinburgh now."

Spring frogs were peeping in the marshy places; the moon was white in the sky; the moist chill air was fragrant; candlelight twinkled out of windows; dark shadows of trees moved on gabled roofs.

"I like it here," said Meggy.

"I make no doubt of that," assented Ewan dryly. "Your eyes have not stopped shining since the moment we set foot on land. Is this the mansion where you are living?"

There was company in the drawing room. Tapers were lit, and the tinkle of a spinnet and the deep boom of a man's voice came to meet Meggy and Ewan hesitating on the threshold. Meggy, who had been used to slipping away to the chilly bedroom when there was merriment in the parlor, felt shy and conscious of her salt-water-stained gown. Alice was at the spinnet, her powdered hair gleaming in the candlelight, her rose-colored flounces billowing around her. Beside her a powerful-looking man in dark satin sang lustily, directing arch glances at his fair accompanist whenever the verse grew sentimental. Pherebee, a daffodil in yellow, whispered in the corner with a tall lad. Mr. Clayton and his wife sat side by side upon the sofa, pleased expressions upon their round faces. The merchant's hands were clasped placidly across his stomach, Mrs. Clayton's short, plump feet, primly crossed, hung an inch or two off the floor. Not a large company, after all.

"'Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,'" finished the musical gallant, "'Youth's a stuff will not endure.'"

On the last note Mrs. Clayton caught sight of Meggy and Ewan and called them in. Introductions followed.

"Mr. MacLaine is both a Shakespearean scholar and a man of action," explained the merchant, with an admiration that amounted almost to wistfulness.

This rare combination of virtues bowed perfunctor-

ily. His bold, black gaze, Meggy guessed shrewdly, lingered only on pretty faces. The lad in the shadows was Mr. Malcolm, a cousin from the back country.

Meggy, lowering her head as she courtesied, saw a pair of buckskin breeches that looked familiar. Her eyes, traveling upward, met the brown eyes of the lad who had passed under her balcony that morning. His voice, as he murmured, "Yo' humble servant, ma'am," was as soft and slurring as Pherebee's.

"Your name, sir, is Scottish," said Meggy, "if your voice is not."

"My dadda came from Ayrshire in '47, but my mother was born and raised in this province, and she and I talk alike."

Alice rose from the spinnet. "I've played all I know," she said. "Meggy, you take my place." She turned, smiling, to Ewan. "I warrant our little city seems sadly quiet to a gentleman from Edinburgh?"

"As to that matter that is to come before the committee," Mr. MacLaine was saying to Mr. Clayton, "perhaps we might discuss it elsewhere?"

With the departure of the elder gentlemen, the groups shifted. Ewan stood before the fire talking to Alice and Pherebee, and as he smiled into their admiring eyes, and parried pretty speech with well-turned compliment, he began by degrees to look more cheerful, and soon he was wagging his head quite in the old way. Mrs. Clayton sat comfortably on in one corner of the

sofa, her toes two inches off the floor, her chin tucked into her soft neck, her eyes closed. The tall lad leaned over the spinnet to talk to Meggy. The light from a taper fell across his dark head and lean brown cheek, bringing out the strength in his well-cut chin, throwing his eyes deep into shadow.

Meggy said nothing, but sat looking down at her hand as it wandered silently over the keys of the spinnet; it was, she suddenly realized, a pretty hand, small and tapering, and very white.

Mr. Malcolm cleared his throat. "Out wheah I live," he said, "we don't have elegant houses like this."

Meggy, looking about the simple drawing room with its low ceiling, its muslin curtains, its severe mantel, attractive though it was in the light of wax candles and hearth fire and the glint of the well-polished mahogany, thought of the big parlor in the Edinburgh land: the paneled walls, the great chimney piece carved with flying birds, the damask draperies, the landscape by Norrie. And yet, in four days, she felt happier in this room of the Claytons' than she had been in four years in Edinburgh. It might be, she thought with a queer little flash, that she was to feel even more at home in a simpler room still, in some back-country room compared to which this would seem the very essence of elegance.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"Cross Creek.—I know that is where you want to

go. Pherebee told me. She said you were going to Flora MacDonald. She is not in Cross Creek now. She's gone, she and her husband and Miss Fanny and the little children, to live near Barbaque Kirk. But for two or three months she lived in a little house on the creek not more than a stone's throw from my home. She's surely a wonderful woman. Why, she's like a girl!"

Meggy glowed. For a moment she felt near to her journey's end.

"Did she say anything about the Prince?" she asked.

The lad chuckled. "Only once—when I've heard her, that is. Somebody had a picture on the wall, some kind of print that showed the Prince escaping and Anne of Jura helping him. When Flora MacDonald saw that she pointed to it and said, 'Turn its face to the wa'. It belies the truth of history. Anne of Jura wasna there and she didna help the Bonny Prince!'" He curled his Southern tongue around the Scotch R, and for a moment the spirited little Highland lady was there in the room.

"Anne of Jura!" exclaimed Meggy indignantly. "And who was she! People should not be allowed to make such pictures!" Her mind returned quickly to the problem that was filling her horizon. "How," she asked practically, "do ladies traveling by themselves ever find a suitable escort into the back country?"

He frowned. She felt that he was putting his whole attention on her question. "The best way," he said

slowly at length, "would be to join some family that was goin' up there. If I hear of anybody comin' soon I'll surely manage to let you know. They have some stagecoach routes in the No'th, I believe, but there's nothin' like that here. Most men ride or go by boat and the womenfolks stay home. When I go back tomorrow or the next day I'll go on one of Dadda's boats, but it will take almost two weeks, and nights I'll be sleeping right on the deck with the men. I reckon that way of traveling wouldn't do for a young lady. But I'll keep my ears open and if I hear of anythin' that would do, I'll surely let you know."

Alice came and joined them. "What are you two looking so solemn about?" she asked playfully. "Is Cousin David sweet-talking you, Meggy? You mustn't take our Southern men seriously, you know."

Meggy did not understand; she looked from one to the other in puzzlement. Was she being told to put no faith in Mr. Malcolm's kind but not very definite offers of assistance?

Cousin David answered for her. "Go 'long with you, Alice. You know I never sweet-talk anybody but you." He turned back to Meggy, his smile lighting up the whole of his lean brown face. "She's quizzin' both of us," he explained. "I'll not say anythin' to you that I don't mean. I think you have right much courage comin' all the way out here by yourself, and I'll help you to get to Flora MacDonald if I can."

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH MEGGY VISITS A PLANTATION

THREE weeks went by and Meggy was still in Wilmington. David Malcolm disappeared upon one of his father's boats and nothing more was heard from him. For a time it was enough for Meggy that she was actually in America and that she had met people who had seen Flora MacDonald. When the new gowns were finished, however, and life in Wilmington, as in older towns, had settled down into routine, then she began to grow restless, thinking she was too long a guest, longing to be on her way toward her goal.

Alice and Pherebee were affectionate and cordial as ever, but they had their duties and their interests. Every afternoon and evening brought a flock of young men about them: serious, pale young men who talked politics, gay young men who talked dancing and hunting and love, awkward young men who could scarce say anything but "Yes, ma'am," or "N-not exactly, ma'am," to their sallies. They listened and dimpled and giggled, all eyes and appreciation, and if afterward in their room they yawned and mimicked the solemn or the stuttering ones, their reward for the

hours spent in such dull society was the reputation which they maintained among family and friends and casual observers. "The young Miss Claytons are great belles," it was said everywhere.

Meggy in her new sea-green lutestring felt far more at ease with the Claytons than ever she had felt in the shadow of Veronica. She listened, too, and sometimes when Alice was suppressing a yawn Meggy was most interested. She made the awkward ones talk of their home or their dogs or even their hopes. Now and again, but rarely, she laughed, and when she did her deep little chuckle made everyone turn to look at her. Sometimes, when conversation lagged, she was asked to sing for them. Especially did they like the old ballads that she sang. "Barbara Allen" they already knew, but there were others unfamiliar to them which she pieced together out of her memory.

Ewan, much as he disapproved of the Clayton attitude toward the King and the government, came frequently to the house, whether for the sake of hearing Alice's pretty attempts to convert him to Whiggism or to warn Meggy against them, he did not make clear. He would hover about Alice and Pherebee for the greater part of the time, and then just before leaving he would come to Meggy to say:

"Flora MacDonald is no Whig, you may depend on that, Meggy. She'll have small patience with all this talk of defying the King!"

It was a relief when the Cameron phaëton, mud dripping from its every wheel, rolled into town one cloudy Monday morning, a relief to see Miss Cameron descend from it, a chip hat atilt upon her high hair, her puce-colored satin gown billowing about her spare figure, embroidered Morocco slippers upon her long, slender feet. She was flushed and weary but alert as ever.

"It is excessively warm," she stated, "and I have been hurled from one side of the carriage to the other since before daylight. Where is Willie?" Willie, who had been sitting on the box with the coachman, had jumped down and was now inspecting the horses with an important frown. "Meggy-Veronica, there is no need to ask you how you have been doing. You are vastly improved. I have come to take you back with me, but we can discuss that later. Jenny, my smelling salts."

Mrs. Jenny, rumpled and moist, crawled out of the phaëton, grumbling.

Meggy was truly glad to see Miss Cameron. She was a trifle in awe of her because of her keen eyes and candid tongue, but she liked her immensely; she had not realized just how much until she saw her again. Calm though she might be, where Miss Cameron was, reflected Meggy, there was action.

"I'm leaving Willie here at school with Mr. Tate," said Miss Cameron later as they sat on the balcony

fanning themselves in the warm, humid air. "But Alexander is too young, and he is wanting in health —croupy, poor child. I want you to come back with me, Meggy, and be company for me and start Alexander on his Latin. I make no doubt you could teach him as much as he would be likely to learn under the dull eye of our friend Mr. Tate. Of course that is not going to Flora MacDonald, but there is yet time for that, and at present I need you. I'm a city mouse, Meggy, and these country spaces get upon my nerves. No one to talk to but the lads and Mrs. Jenny and the Negroes —my brother is so much away fomenting rebellion— and at night no one to listen to but the hoot of the owl and the melancholy cry of the whip-poor-will."

So Meggy went back with Miss Cameron to Holly Quarter. And a dismal ride it was. The rain came down in torrents, pattering and splashing upon the roof of the carriage, seeping in at the corners. The horses steamed. Twice the carriage was stuck in the sandy road; twice they had to get out and balance themselves on logs on the edge of a swamp until the wheels could be dug out of the ruts. And the rain sluiced down into the marsh, the trees overhead dipped and swayed, the tall reeds dripped, frogs croaked in the pools— wet feet, wet clothes, a wet, wet world. It was dark when finally, cramped and wet and hungry, they turned into the long driveway that led from the main road to the plantation house at Holly Quarter. The

horses knew that they were near their stable, and they finished the last quarter mile in great style. A strip of wet woods went by in a blur, a dim field, and then they came upon the house. Surrounded by great old trees, it stood four-square and solid, welcoming candles in its windows, Negro servants with flaring and sizzling torches about its portico. Little Alexander came rushing out into the rain to fling his arms around Meggy.

"I have a little bear," he told her, while the drops splashed on his upturned face. "Meggy, I have a little baby bear for a pet!"

Although it was nearly May and the day had been warm, small fires were burning in the fireplaces in parlor and dining room, and very cheerful they looked, too, flaring up with the rich red blaze of pine. The rooms were large and paneled, somewhat sparsely furnished. At the windows damask curtains of some dim rose color moved slightly. A hunting crop in the mantel, a collection of strangely shaped fungi upon the table, a stack of shotguns in a corner spoke of the country and the owner, a vase of dogwood told of the presence of a woman. The Negro servants seemed to be all-pervasive; they made a great to-do over bringing in the bags and poking up the fires. Meggy saw them glance curiously at her.

"Zoë will wait upon you while you are here, Meggy," said Miss Cameron.

A slim young mulatto detached herself from the rest

and stood looking sidewise under her lashes at Meggy and smiling broadly, in simple pleasure at being noticed. "Lonie, tell Suphy we shall be ready for supper in a quarter of an hour. Perhaps then we shall have it before the half hour is passed. Jenny? Jenny, I am ready to go upstairs. Eh, sirs, I am tired and wet and cross. This is a shocking uncomfortable country."

Alexander undertook to conduct Meggy to her room. He kept up a babble about his bear and his fawn and his dadda's horses, the long rides that he had taken.

"Have you learned to ride since you have been here?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes." He stopped and swallowed, too full of pride to utter anything more for the second.

"You *have!*" said Meggy.

"Yes, and Toby says I can ride almost as well as he can. My dadda has eight saddle horses. I ride John now. He's old, but some day soon my dadda says I can ride his big hunter. Here's your room. In the daytime you can look out and see the river. Some lads went swimming yesterday."

Zoë went into the room before her, carrying a branching candlestick; the three flames blew back with three little streams of smoke as she walked. She set them on the mantel and they burned up straight again, lighting the rosy sprigs upon the wall paper, the big field bed hung with green damask, the chest of drawers, the heavy rose and white china upon the washstand. There

was no fire on the hearth here, and though the room was not cold, it was damp and a little cheerless. Meggy felt a pang for Alice and Pherebee, that merry pair who chattered so constantly over their dressing and undressing.

She sat upon a chair while Zoë on her knees before her removed the damp shoes and stockings and substituted dry ones from her bag. The old sea-water-stained gown which she had frugally worn for the long drive went into the cupboard, and the new sprigged chintz was donned in its place. Zoë's slim tan fingers were deft and soothing. Meggy felt as if she must be dreaming. To be actually in America, visiting upon one of the Impartial Hand's elegant and sumptuous plantations, with a servant to wait upon her, with a little store of half-joes and shillings and two more jewels still in the little chamois bag, with two new gowns made expressly for her, with—and this was the greatest miracle of all—a welcome wherever she went! Meggy MacIntosh in Edinburgh was the poor and homely cousin of the beautiful Miss Veronica Keith. Meggy MacIntosh in America was an independent young lady of spirit with a voice that people liked to listen to, and the fact that she was the niece of an Edinburgh baronet was nothing in her disfavor.

By the time she was dressed, supper was ready. It was laid upon the mahogany table in the dining room; hot clear soup, baked shad just out of the river that morning.

"Faugh," said Miss Cameron, "this fish is all bones. What would I not give for one of our good Scottish red herring. I think I am too old for this land, Meggy." (In that instant Meggy seemed to hear—how long ago it seemed—Mr. MacPherson's gentle voice saying, "America is a land for the young, Meggy.") Miss Cameron went on: "I shall never become reconciled to it, or to its prodigal, indolent, wasteful ways: It is too much, Meggy. Too much wood, too much water, too much game, too much service (and none of it good)" —as she spoke she waved back the china dish of plum preserves into which the serving maid had accidentally dipped her thumb—"too much bones. My brother dotes upon it. He seems to have lost his loyalty. He consorts altogether with these violent men of passion who are nursing an unnatural and rebellious spirit in the land."

She spoke seriously, and her thin face with its keen gray eyes and firm mouth fell into lines of sadness.

"What is it they want, those colonists? A member in Parliament? No taxes to pay? They talk grandiloquently of justice and liberty, but they say nothing that is definite."

If the word "independence" had been uttered in Wilmington at that time, Meggy had not heard it.

"They are like sulky children, scowling and kicking at those who would do them a kindness, howling for that which they cannot have. Sulky children, who need a good trouncing."

"I have myself," said Meggy, as she had said to Alice and Pherebee, "no love for the House of Hanover."

"For the House of Hanover, perhaps not, or even for fat Geordie himself. But for the Majesty of the King and of Great Britain you should feel abiding love and loyalty."

Meggy crumbled a bit of bread thoughtfully. Already she was beginning to feel within herself the stirrings of loyalty to the new land. In this short time it had given to her sunshine and friendship and a freedom that she had never known before.

"And furthermore," said Miss Cameron, in a tone almost of exasperation, "why so many men of solid Scots birth have suddenly become impractical quite escapes me. These scattered colonies will never unite —Roundheads and Cavaliers, Dutch, French, Germans, Swedes, Irish, Scots, they would be fighting among themselves in the first week—and the King's punishment will be slow but sure. A handful of British regulars could put down sporadic rebellion, and then there will be fines to pay, and confiscated estates." She looked about her at the big room, so wide and open, so suggestive of comfort and of leisure, and of the means to maintain both. "I fear to see my brother lose his home."

Meggy was waked early the next morning by the laughter and chatter of the darkies in their quarters and the distant screech of the sawmill. The sunlight danced upon the young green leaves of a tree just outside her window. When she sat up she could see the

river gleaming down below at the foot of a wide green lawn silvered over with dew; beyond it on the other side tall cypress trees rose out of a swamp. The air was fragrant with the early morning, and with the smell of fresh earth, of flowers in the garden, of the pines in the woodland. There was wood smoke in it, too, and a hint perhaps of the farmyard, with more than a hint of the sausages for breakfast.

Meggy drew the Holland sheet up close against her chin and began to think of Latin declensions. Mr. MacPherson had used to criticize the soundness of her Latin prose, but it would be long ere Alexander would be ready for that. This very day she would begin to teach him his *stella, stellæ, stellæ, stellam, stella;* out of doors, in some sunny spot, she thought, for the lad was over-pale and wanted sunshine. She was needed here. As companion to Miss Cameron and tutor to Alexander, she might accept their hospitality with no loss of independence. But never—she clasped her hands behind her head and drew her knees up into a white mountain—would she forget that it was but a stopping place on her way to Flora MacDonald. And while she waited, she must be preparing herself for her journey. But how?

In that moment, with all the vague early-morning noises of a plantation in her ears, with the breeze coming through the open window and ruffling her fine, flying hair, the answer to the question that for weeks had

been dinging in her head like a bell clapper flashed into her mind. If she had a horse and a maid she could go anywhere with any escort. She would not have to wait for a family with an extra seat in their phaëton to turn toward Cross Creek. She had means still to buy what she needed; but she must, she told herself to still her rising excitement, be cautious. She must have just the right horse and just the right maidservant. And first, she must learn to ride.

So, in the days that followed, Meggy learned to ride. At first mounted upon old John, she ambled placidly around the meadow, close to the zig-zag fence, which seemed somehow to give her a feeling of security. Later, as she acquired confidence and skill, she rode a bay mare named Tessa, a pretty little animal, gentle and playful. Since there was no lady's saddle at Holly Quarter, she rode astride, and her riding costume, to the ill-concealed grief of Zoë and the amusement of Miss Cameron, was Veronica's old blue gown. She chuckled to herself, as she cantered across the fields with her skirt creeping up over her knees and disclosing slim legs encased in gray wool stockings, to think of Veronica's shocked surprise could she have seen the fate of her once elegant attire.

As the days grew warmer Meggy and Alexander rode in the early morning when the woods were still fresh, and studied until noon in the shade of the portico. After dinner, when the sun burned overhead in a pale

sky, when everything green drooped dustily and even the droning sawmill grew sleepy and stopped, she went to her room to rest. The heavy curtains on the bed had been taken down and a voluminous netting called a mosquito bar was draped over all to keep out the vicious singing insects that had not been included at all in Meggy's dreams of America. In the late afternoon, when shadows like cool fingers slipped over the grass, everyone revived, and, bathed and dressed, came into the drawing room or out on the veranda that faced the river to talk and be amused.

When Mr. Cameron was at home, as he seldom was, there were constant visitors, chiefly gentlemen who wished to see him alone. They would be closeted long in the study, and when they came out the words King, Committee, Association were still upon their lips. Sometimes Mr. Cameron would ride away with his visitors; late that night he would return, and his horses' hooves, pattering on the still air, would make Meggy think of highwaymen and smugglers and desperadoes, though she knew, from remarks he let fall at breakfast, that he passed these evenings at ease in the drawing rooms of other planters' houses, where his political views had a more cordial reception than his rigid Tory sister accorded them. Gradually Meggy came to know some of his visitors by name. Mr. Cornelius Harnett of Hilton was perhaps the most frequent caller. He was a large man, heavily built, by no means handsome, and indeed

rather uncouth in appearance. His wife was an adept at the baking of little cakes and biscuits, and a neighborly soul. It was an incongruous sight to see Mr. Harnett come riding up to the portico on his great roan, holding between the thumb and forefinger of his huge hand a little basket of cakes daintily tricked out with a fringed napkin.

When Mr. Cameron was away his sister and Meggy would read and talk together, and at dusk Meggy would open the spinnet in the drawing room and sing softly. On these days Ewan was most apt to ride out to see them. It was always easy to tell the state of Ewan's mind. If things went well he wagged his head cockily and was full of quips and jokes. If things went ill, his shoulders sagged and the corners of his mouth drooped; he had little to say.

The first time he came he had been on the crest of the wave. He was riding a new horse which he had just bought, a handsome black creature whose ebony glossiness was an effective contrast to his own fair good looks. He had an invitation from Governor Martin to celebrate the King's birthday at the governor's palace in New Berne, and he had ordered for the occasion a new suit from Dougald McNight, the best tailor in Wilmington. The news of the fight at Lexington and of the bravery of the patriots, which caused the greatest excitement among Mr. Cameron's group, had just been received, but Ewan had nothing to say

about it that day. He could talk of nothing else but his suit and his tailor. "No Edinburgh tailor, to be sure, Meggy, but he made a suit for Archibald Neilson, the governor's secretary, that was more than passable. Dod, it was tolerable neat."

When he came again he was depressed indeed. He dropped into a chair on the veranda and sat there unsmiling, his chin on his hand. Meggy made no effort to fill the silence. She sat watching the last glow of the sunset upon the big magnolia tree. The furled white buds stood up from the tips of the branches like candles. From the tangle of shrubbery on the river bank came the evensong of a bird.

"Dod, Meggy," burst out Ewan, "you have no idea of what waiting is. You sit here upon one of the finest plantations of the Northeast, you are right in the midst of the very thing I've come all the way from Edinburgh to gain, and I—I'm still as far from it as I was in Edinburgh."

He looked down and picked at the frayed ruffles at his wrist.

"Dinna lose heart, Ewan," said Meggy pleadingly. "You've not been in Wilmington much above two months. It takes time to make a fortune. Conditions may mend. Let me see if I can sew up your ruffles for you. How is your suit coming on? Will it be ready for the governor's party?"

Ewan abandoned his ruffles. "Dod, Meggy, hadn't

you heard? Has Mr. Cameron not been here?" Meggy shook her head. "You haven't heard? The governor is fled to Fort Johnston! Some scoundrels at New Berne burned his house and threatened his life. He sent his wife and children to safety on Long Island, and he himself with his officers has taken refuge in Fort Johnston. Archibald Neilson is distraught. He has had to make arrangements and conduct all to safety—and shaking like an aspen leaf with the ague all the time himself. 'Tis a bad business. What do you think of your so-called Patriots now, miss?"

Here indeed was news. A royal governor put to flight by his subjects!

"Is Fort Johnston that flimsy affair which we saw in the Lower Cape Fear on the way to Wilmington?"

"Aye. Built of *tapia*, which seems to be chiefly ground-up shells and water. Miss Janet Schaw declared that a troop of blackguard Edinburgh lads could take it with no weapons but their own popguns."

"If it comes to war," said Meggy slowly, "what shall you do?"

"It will never come to war. The King has been too kind and indulgent. Now he must act. He will send a few regulars to Boston to settle matters there [He gained but little at Lexington, thought Meggy] and more to New Berne and Wilmington, and these hot-headed, ranting Whigs will know what it is to bear the weight of a king's displeasure."

Miss Cameron, coming out, invited Ewan to stay for supper. She had taken a fancy to him lately, admitting that he was a "well-looking lad" and had the "right attitude toward things."

All through supper she and Ewan discussed the flight of the governor and the shocking conduct of the colonists. They denounced the colonial leaders to their heart's content. Meggy sat silent, eating preserved figs. It was no use, she told herself, to contradict them, but this unrest was a bigger thing than either of them dreamed. She helped herself to more figs. They repeat the same things over and over, she thought. A moth fluttered into the candle and fell with singed wings. If there should be war, thought Meggy with a tingle, what an *interesting* time for me to have come!

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH MEGGY ACQUIRES A MAID AND A HORSE

I CAN'T see," said Pherebee, "why you keep harping on Flora MacDonald. From the way you talk one would think she had personally sent for you to come out here and stay with her—and as a matter of fact I don't suppose she so much as knows of your existence."

Meggy chuckled. "I suppose not," she admitted. "But I have heard of her all of my life, and I want to see her." She was understating her sentiments in the matter, but how to explain to pretty Sassenachs that Highland feeling of hers that was drawing her to Flora MacDonald?

"If you aren't happy here," said Pherebee, "come back to us. Don't go up into the sand hills."

"Of course," said Alice chillingly, "if you wish to get into a veritable hornets' nest of Loyalists, that is the place to go. Your Flora MacDonald and her husband at this moment are busily engaged in raising an army of wild Highlanders to march down upon us. You know yourself, Meggy, that it was to shut off communication between Allen MacDonald and the gover-

nor that our men burned Fort Johnston and drove His Excellency to take refuge on the *Cruizer.*"

"There is one person in Cross Creek who is a good Patriot," said Pherebee, looking mischievously under her lashes at Meggy. "Our good cousin David Malcolm. You made a conquest there! He sent a message in a letter from his dadda to my dadda that he had not forgotten his promise to you. And not one word to Alice or me."

The three girls were in Meggy's bedroom in the Camerons' summer house on Masonboro Sound. Mr. Cameron owed a number of small courtesies to Mr. Clayton, and at his request Miss Cameron had invited Alice and Pherebee, who had not been out of the stifling town all summer, to come to the Sound for a visit, although she had groaned privately to Meggy over the prospect of having two more ardent Whigs in the house. They had driven out early that morning, and now were resting, attired in muslin sacques and petticoats and very little else, under the mosquito bars upon the bed and the settee in the big chamber that was Meggy's.

"I can't see why," said Pherebee, who was fond of the phrase, "people who fought with everything they had against George the Second in Prince Charlie's day, and lost everything they had, too, should be so loyal to George the Third."

Meggy had been asking herself this question ever since she had heard, to her vast surprise, that the

Highlanders, many of whom had been ruined by the terrible punishment meted out to those who fought against the King in '46, were preparing to fight again, this time on the side of Hanover. "Many of them, I suppose," she said slowly, "are afraid to fight against the King. And many have taken the Oath of Allegiance."

"What's that?"

"Those who came to America after '47 were forced to swear allegiance to the King, and Mr. Cameron says that the governor has revived the oath and compels new emigrants from Scotland to take it now. It is a terrible oath." Meggy had heard it from her father when she was a little lass. She could still hear his low voice and see his mouth, twisted with bitterness, as he said the last words over to her. "'May I be cursed in my undertakings, family, and property; may I never see my wife and children, father, mother, or relation; may I be killed in battle as a coward, and lie without Christian burial in a strange land, far from the graves of my forefathers and kindred—may all this come across me if I break my oath.'"

"Ooh!" said Pherebee, shivering prettily.

"Mercy on us, Meggy," exclaimed Alice, "have you taken any oaths?"

"Meggy, tell us," begged Pherebee persuasively, "just where do you stand really? Which side are you on—or are you straddling the fence?"

Meggy was troubled; she did not wish to straddle, she wished to stand firmly for one side or the other. But if the side of the colonies were the side of freedom, as she had thought, what then was Flora MacDonald doing preparing to fight for the King? Surely if anyone loved freedom it would be Flora MacDonald.

"I have been in this country scarce five months," she answered. "At first I think I was on the side of the colonies, but now I am not sure. It is a beautiful country, but it is hard to go against one's own people."

"I was afraid living so long in the same house with Miss Cameron would tell on you," said Pherebee wisely.

Alice clapped her hands over a mosquito that had managed to get under the netting. Downstairs the tall mahogany clock in the corner after a preliminary creak of its wooden works uttered eleven coughs.

"Mercy me!" gasped Meggy, scrambling down from the bed. "I have to carry a bottle of blackberry cordial to Mrs. Herring for Miss Cameron."

"Mrs. Herring! There's a Tory for you. No fence-straddling in that case! Her husband has been declared by the Committee of Safety *inimical to the cause*. What is she doing here?"

"Fanning herself like the rest of us," replied Meggy. "Their country seat is on the other side of Finian—that should be good influence for them!"

Finian was the estate of Mr. William Hooper, fore-

most among the Wilmington Patriots. Meggy had never seen him, for since she had been in Wilmington he had been sitting with the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. But that he was a sensitive and honorable gentleman she knew well; even the Tories spoke only good of him.

Alice made a motion to rise. "I think I will go with you. It surely is not much warmer outside than it is within."

Meggy had her own very good reasons for preferring not to take anyone with her upon her errand. "I'm coming directly back, but someone," she improvised hastily, "should be here in case Ewan should ride out."

She dressed hurriedly, stabbed her finger with her cairngorm brooch in fastening her kerchief, and went off sucking it. In the hall she met Miss Cameron.

"You must make haste, Meggy. I had thought you would be ready a good half hour ago." She lowered her voice. "The mmm—you know—is at the bottom of the basket under the napkin. If anyone should be there you must manage to let Mrs. Herring know where it is without referring to it directly. You understand?"

Meggy scurried down the stairs, saw briefly in the gilt-framed mirror at the foot a slim person in blue-sprigged chintz with sandy locks escaping from under a frilly mob cap, and pushed open the front door. The air outside was moist and warm, laden with the sea and with the heavy fragrance of the clematis vines fes-

tooned over the pillars of the porch. In the dense shade of the moss-hung live oaks the air was green, except where sunshine, heavy as gold, fell through in blazing bars and splotches. Beyond the lawn the heat shimmered over the pale water of the Sound; long fingers of swampy land broke its smooth expanse into shallow bays and coves; beyond the farthest bar the Atlantic breakers rolled in.

When Meggy came out there was a bark and a yip, and the dogs all came rushing forth to greet her. Nip and Tuck were two of Mr. Hooper's English fox hounds allowed out of the kennels because they were such gentle playmates for the children; Jasper belonged to Mr. Cameron. He had the mottled blue coat of the bloodhound, and Meggy had never learned to like him, always imagining him tracing some weary fugitive through the swamps. Henry was a spaniel, with fringy ears and clumsy feet and vibrating tail. Kip, the yapping one, was a lively little mongrel, beloved above all the others. They broke the slumbering stillness with their noise.

Miss Cameron had ordered the sulky and John for her; it was better for Meggy to go alone on her errand. Innocent though her mission might be, it was well to allow no opportunity for chance gossip. Assisted by Toby, she mounted the high shaky seat, settled her basket on her lap, fingered the reins in her best style, and clucked to the gentle John. The wheels

slipped and squeaked in the white sand of the roadway.

On the lawn at Finian a little band was drilling. Willie the grown-up had so far compromised his dignity as to be their general in a cocked hat made, Meggy suspected, of the latest number of the *Cape Fear Mercury;* behind him marched Alexander, red-faced and earnest, and solemn little William Hooper, followed by a string of small black kinky-heads. At intervals they would scatter, run to drop on one knee behind trees and bushes, and the air would be full of shots. "Bam!" "Boom!" "Bang!" they shrilled.

Between Finian and the Herring seat the sandy track led through a grove of long-leafed pines. Among their tall straight trunks, deep-creased like joints in armor, the sunshine was golden; below was the white sand and the reddish broom straw; above, the long green needles, faintly stirring.

The Herring place had been neglected. Its outhouses and offices looked as though the winds of another winter would blow them away; the paint was peeling off the house; the shrubbery had grown wild. Meggy climbed down from the sulky and tied John to a tree—needless precaution, for old John moved only under compulsion—and picked her way through the rank grass to the front porch. All over the steps sprawled honeysuckle, and it wound itself greedily around the finer plants. The air was full of its sweetness and of the hum of bees. A humming bird, emerald and ruby

and a blur of wings, dipped his long beak delicately into one after another of the little cream-colored and coral trumpets. Meggy stepped carefully over a rotten board on the porch and tapped at the tarnished knocker.

It was several minutes before anybody answered, and then the door opened a crack and an anxious white face peered around the edge of it and brightened visibly at the sight of Meggy. A familiar face, but not that of Mrs. Herring.

"Why," said Meggy, "Tibbie . . . Tibbie MacNabb!"

"Aye. It's me." Tall and gangling as ever, the Highland girl of the boat beamed down upon her. The greenstuff damask gown was faded, its scarlet callimanco cuffs streaked. She jerked her head toward the stairs. "She's waiting on you."

Meggy took that to mean that she was to go upstairs; so up she ran, and followed the sound of voices to a front room whose curtainless windows were open on the Sound. She found the Herrings there. Mr. Herring seemed to be pacing the floor, clasping and unclasping his hands behind him; one side of his face twitched nervously. He had evidently been barking at his wife. One bark was arrested in mid-utterance as Meggy entered. Mrs. Herring was a short woman, excessively wide in proportion to her height. To-day she seemed to be even wider than usual and her soft, pudgy little face was scarlet and streaming with perspiration.

"Dear me, I'm so glad you've come!" she said. "Mr. H. has been most tahsome. Now the basket. Blackberry cordial. Dear Miss Cameron is so thoughtful. And very clever, too. No one would look farther than a bottle of blackberry cordial. Ah, here's the passport. 'Permit Mr. Josiah Herring and party'—and party, that must be I—'to pass down the river August'—and so forth—'on a fishing trip.' Tell Miss Cameron I shall never forget her kindness in procuring this for me, and every cool wet day in London I shall think of her with tears, suffocating in this oven here."

Mr. Herring spoke but rarely, and then with some dryness. "Amend that message to read, Miss MacIntosh, that Mrs. Herring will think of Miss Cameron in London—*if she ever reaches London.* Considering all the risks she persists in running and the indiscretions she commits, I think it extremely unlikely that we shall ever succeed even in reaching the *Cruizer.*"

Meggy knew their plans. The permit that Miss Cameron had managed to procure for them from her brother would enable them to leave Wilmington in canoes under the pretense of going fishing down the river. Instead of returning at nightfall they would paddle on to where the *Cruizer* rode at anchor. There they would be picked up, and entertained by the governor until a vessel should be found to take them back to England. The greatest secrecy had to be maintained lest some whisper of their plans reach the ears of the militia,

or of the mob. Miss Cameron herself ran some risk, at least of the anger of her brother, but the Herrings were an unimportant enemy pair, and when once they had gone their disappearance would scarcely cause a ripple.

"Mr. H. is being so tahsome," sighed his wife. "I don't know what risks he means. He says I don't look like a fishing trip,"—Meggy could not help agreeing with Mr. H. that the dumpy little lady, so warm and uncomfortable, did *not* look like a fishing trip—"in all these clothes, but I couldn't leave my best gowns behind, and to carry a bag would create suspicion." She lifted her skirt, and beneath it was a quilted green satin petticoat; below that peeped another one of sky-blue tiffitie. No wonder the poor soul was warm!

"I don't mean your clothes," said Mr. Herring. "I mean Tibbie. I never approved of indentured servants. You bought her without my knowledge and against my expressed opinion. And now what are we to do with her? We cannot take her with us. To sell her in Wilmington this afternoon would certainly arouse suspicion. What are we to do? Free her or give her away, and lose money which we cannot spare?"

Mrs. Herring rose from the chair on which she had been sitting and waddled over to the window. "I'm sure I don't know, Josiah," she said, her face puckered with distress. "I only bought her because if I hadn't that great rough brute of a man would have, and I should

have dreamed at nights of her poor frightened face if I had gone away and left her to him. I thought we could take her home with us, but I see that's impossible. It's all very tahsome," she said to Meggy.

"I'll buy Tibbie's time from you," said Meggy, almost before she knew she had spoken.

They were eager, but they hesitated, fearing that she had not money enough. Meggy turned her back and found the chamois bag; she brought out the other ruby earring.

Mr. Herring looked disappointed, but Mrs. Herring's eyes for the first time lost their worried expression and brightened with genuine pleasure. She held out her hand, pudgy and pink as a baby pig, and Meggy placed the glowing jewel upon it.

"Why, it's an earring!" she exclaimed, "and only one."

"I sold the other. A Margaret MacIntosh was long ago a lady in waiting to the Queen and she wore those earrings at Holyrood Castle when King James the Fourth held court there."

"King James the Fourth! It would make a handsome ring, or a drop on a thin gold chain."

"I could use gold coins to better advantage. And this gem is far more valuable than an indentured servant." Mr. Herring spoke to Meggy with unwonted kindness in his tone. "I should have to give you back too many of my store of Spanish dollars, and I have not suffi-

cient as it is. No, Mrs. Herring, I think you will have to forego your King James ruby, and we will risk selling Tibbie this afternoon. The fellow who would have bought her before may possibly be willing to buy her now for a little less—and hold his tongue. Come, my dear, we must be on our way. Now that we have the passport, there is nothing to delay us."

Mrs. Herring could not bear to let the ruby go. "It might be the saving of us when we get to London," she murmured. She bethought herself. "There is Whitey! Would you take Whitey?"—her voice was so eager!—"and—and a riding joseph?" She toddled to the closet and brought out a green riding joseph laced with gold, dusty and creased, and a green velvet capuchin bonnet lined with white sarsenet. "My cousin sent it to me from London. It has never been worn. It was"—a sigh—"too tight."

Whitey was the horse, broad-backed and dingy white, no longer young, the last remnant of stables that had once been at least average. Tibbie and Whitey and some battered finery! Meggy looked at the ruby blazing still in the sunshine on Mrs. Herring's fat palm.

The two faces decided her: Mrs. Herring's, red and streaming, tremulous with hope; Tibbie's (the girl had obviously been listening in the hall and had slipped into the room when her fate was spoken of), thin and white, her blue eyes full of prayerful entreaty.

"I think that will be fair exchange," she said gently. "I am willing."

While Mr. Herring found Tibbie's papers, and signed them, Mrs. Herring brushed and shook the green joseph, and Tibbie wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron, smiled beatifically, and was forced to wipe her eyes again.

"I do hope you reach London safely," said Meggy, cutting short the effusive thanks of Mrs. Herring and the curt acknowledgment that seemed to proceed with difficulty from her husband. "I trust you will. Tibbie, stay here and do anything you can for Mrs. Herring, and when they are gone follow the road to the Camerons' house. It is the yellow one under the live oaks." It felt strange to be giving orders to her own servant.

"Whitey," explained Mr. Herring, "is required to convey us into Wilmington. Sappho, our coachman, is sold to Mr. Howe, a mile down the Sound. He will bring Whitey back to you."

Meggy went downstairs through the still dingy house that looked as if it had long been preparing to be deserted, and out again to the glint of sun on the water and the buzzing of the bees in the honeysuckle. John was peacefully cropping grass. She untied him and climbed up into the sulky, folded the riding habit and capuchin bonnet into a wad by her side, settled Miss Cameron's little basket, empty now except for Tibbie's indenture papers, took up the reins and clucked to John.

"Now," she said aloud, "I am ready. I have a maid and a horse."

She was ready. August burned itself out; September with its purple shadows crept past; October came. And nothing happened.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH MEGGY MEETS A GENTLEMAN ON A SECRET MISSION

MEGGY stretched out her hand for the letter. "It came," Mr. Cameron told her, "under cover of a letter to Mr. Clayton, and when I saw him to-day he asked me to bear it to you."

It was sealed with a blob of red wax, and it was addressed in a strong, slanting hand to Miss Margaret MacIntosh. Over the corner was scribbled in Pherebee's unformed scrawl: "I said you had made a conquest. Why do you not come to see us?" Leaning against a sun-warmed pillar of the porch, with the wind from the Sound blowing her hair and her skirts, Meggy opened and read the missive that made her heart pound wildly and sent her hand fluttering to her throat. It was brief and formal—no love letter—but its carefully worded phrases told her that at last the time had come for action.

"HONORED MADAM:

"I would not have you think that I had forgotten or neglected my promise to help you toward—it is best that I write no names—the lady of whom we spoke

together. It has come to my knowledge that her son-in-law will be secretly in Wilmington one night or two during the second week of this month, at the house of Dr. Cobbitt. He perhaps would be able to escort you to this country.

"Your humble and ob'd't serv't,
"DAVID MALCOLM."

At the foot of the page there was a hasty postscript, "Pray destroy this letter," and beneath it, boyishly, another, "Anyone can direct you to our house, situate near the Cool Spring."

Meggy read the letter through a second time, and a third, to impress it on her memory, then slowly tore it into little bits and buried them in the sandy earth beneath a rosebush. Flora MacDonald's son-in-law was secretly in Wilmington, and David Malcolm, a good Whig, sent the news to her instead of to his Whig committee. He would be in ill favor with the Whigs if his action ever were found out. Yet he had run this risk in order to keep a promise, made casually enough, to her. It was a big thing that he had done for her, and she must prove her gratitude by proceeding with the utmost secrecy and caution. Smiling, she thought of Pherebee's little scribbled note, and she was flooded with affection for both of them. The kindness of people upon whom she had no possible claim held a piercing sweetness for Meggy still.

She tried to concentrate upon her plans. This was Tuesday; the second week of October was well started. Tibbie, Whitey, the riding habit, steamed and refurbished—all was in readiness. She would say that she was going to visit the Claytons in Wilmington for a few days. The difficulty would be to manage to talk with Dr. Cobbitt, a stiff-necked Tory whom she had never met, and his secret guest without drawing attention to herself or to them. She would have to confide in someone. Miss Cameron, to whom her first thoughts flew, would be of no use at all; her too candid remarks about the Rebels (she had actually used the word) had gained her enemies, in spite of her brother's high record among the Patriots; she was, she said herself, in danger of the tar pot, and her assistance in the present matter would be only an added cause of apprehension. Alice Clayton, too, was out of the question, and for the opposite reason; her patriotic zeal would lead her at once to the committee, no matter whom her tale bearing might betray. Pherebee would delight in the thrill of the little intrigue, but she was hopelessly indiscreet. Meggy finally decided on Ewan; he was a Loyalist, he knew Dr. Cobbitt, he was a man. Men had, Meggy admitted, a certain skill in arranging practical matters of journeys and voyages. And Ewan had, during these troublous summer months when feeling ran high in Wilmington and by twos and threes the Loyalists had left the city, become more and more her friend.

There was nothing now to be done but to go. She found it unexpectedly hard. It seemed wrong and miserably ungrateful to tell these friends who had been so kind to her the casual good-byes appropriate to an absence of but a few days; to go away without letting them know that she was going for a long time, perhaps forever, to Flora MacDonald in the back country. Yet she must; it was either to do that, or to stay here. For an instant the idea of staying lured her almost irresistibly. It would be so simple, so safe, so easy. Why should she face a long, possibly dangerous, and certainly uncomfortable journey to the back settlements merely because of her strange feeling that her fate called her there? But it went deeper than that, she told herself quickly. She felt that not until she had seen Flora MacDonald and her countrymen there could she know where she stood in this terrible conflict between colonies and mother country. Meggy, astraddle on the fence, was wretchedly unhappy; yet she could not come down on either side until she had seen her own people, seen the little Highland heroine who for so long had been to her the symbol of freedom.

With a steady voice she told the Camerons of her desire to spend a day or two in Wilmington with the Claytons, and ordered Tibbie to pack her bag. The little old bag that she had brought from Scotland proved quite inadequate for her new wardrobe: the blue sprigged chintz, the lutestring, the soft gray woollen

gown that Miss Cameron had insisted on giving her. Miss Cameron herself came in while they were struggling to squeeze it shut. She sent Tibbie up to the attic to look for a larger traveling bag.

When they were alone together she turned to Meggy, searching her face with keen eyes and saying, "My dear, I am not asking any questions. It is better for me to know nothing. But if you should go to the back country, you will be very careful under whose protection you go, will you not, and you will return to us some time?"

Meggy put her arms around her. "Who is Flora MacDonald's son-in-law?" she whispered.

"Captain Alexander MacLeod, retired officer of marines. At least forty-five. A most sober, respectable, and courageous gentleman. Excellent. I have asked no questions," she said aloud, "and you have told me nothing. I wish you a satisfactory sojourn in Wilmington. The lads will miss you."

Mr. Cameron could not understand why she could not wait till the morrow when he himself would be going into town in the phaëton. He saw no reason for taking Tibbie. He could not imagine why she needed to attach such a large bag to her saddle; surely she could not need so many gowns for just a day or two. It was fortunate, he said, that Whitey's back was so broad.

"You remind me of nothing," he said after he had

helped her to mount and Toby had boosted Tibbie up behind her, "so much as that good caballero Don Quixote."

Meggy smoothed the green folds of her habit. "I feel," she said, a little unsteadily, "like Columbus."

Part of the way led by a sandy track through the pines, which kept up an unceasing murmur overhead like that of the sea which she was leaving behind; part along a narrow causeway through a swamp. It was hard riding, for the road was built out of the reeds and water on logs laid crosswise; sod had been piled on top, but in places it was rough, and Whitey slipped once or twice and nearly turned his ankle. The sun was warm, but the wind in the cypress trees and the tall cat-o'-nine-tails was fresh. Beside the road the water was brown and clear, starred here and there with white waterlilies and patterned with their blue-green pads. The leaves of a swamp maple had turned a dark burning scarlet. A gray and white bird flew low, calling shrilly. They met but few people on the way: a man wading through the marsh with a dog and a gun; a farmer on his mule; a wagonload of parrot-voiced girls on their way to some country festivity.

Meggy found changes in Wilmington Many of the houses where she had known lights and laughter were boarded up. She heard the roll of a drum, the high bleat of an ill-played fife, the thin antics of a fiddle. A ragged band it was, but the martial air and the spirit with

which it was played made her blood run faster. She goaded Whitey to further activity. Tibbie bounced and clung tightly to her waist. "Oh, Miss Meggy," she gasped, "it's sodgers!"

The plain across the road from the Claytons' house was covered with them, it seemed. Preceded by their drum, fife, and fiddle, they wheeled and marched. There must have been close to two thousand of them. Some were armed with guns, some with swords. All wore long hunting shirts which the wind behind them caused to flutter out in front like skirts. Many were out of step; here and there a company got itself sadly tangled in its maneuvers. It was not a crack redcoat regiment, but it had a vigor and a spirit that made themselves felt.

"Meggy! Oh, Meggy! Meggy MacIntosh! I'm coming right down!"

It was Pherebee's voice from the second-storey balcony. In a moment Pherebee was at her side, chattering joyously. "I'm so glad you're here. Hurry and dismount. Cuffey! Cuffey! You, Cuffey! Where is that good-for-nothing nigger? You came on drill day! Aren't they wonderful? Alice and I know all the officers. There is a little captain who is like to die for love of Alice. Cuffey, take Miss Meggy's horse. Now come upstairs at once and dress. As soon as drill is over the house will be full of officers come to tea!"

Meggy's heart sank. It was an unfortunate day on which to come in search of a Loyalist on a secret mission.

the town full of militia kindled with excitement and grog, the very house where she was staying the rendezvous of officers. Ewan would not come to the house to see her, and it would look very strange if she insisted upon dashing away at once to call upon him. Perhaps later, when the merriment in the parlor was at its height, she could slip away unnoticed. She managed a word with Tibbie.

"Go to the shop of Campbell & Hogg, and if Mr. MacNeill is there tell him to stay there until I come. Tell him I may be delayed, but I must see him. Then come back. If there is anyone else in the shop make some pretense but don't give him my message till he is alone. Do you understand, Tibbie?"

Tibbie adored her. She would carry out her commands to the letter, and she could be trusted to talk to no one. Poor ignorant Highland lass, she had been in a state of constant dismay since she had landed in this strange and bewildering country. To her Meggy seemed infinitely strong and kind and resourceful, and to the little mistress who had given a ruby for her she gave all the loyalty that was in a Highland heart—and that is a large fund of loyalty indeed.

"What did Cousin David write to you about, Meggy?" said Alice as they were dressing.

"Yes, what was it?" echoed Pherebee. "We were ready to faint with curiosity. We weighed the letter and held it to the light and all but broke the seal! But our

Cousin David must be an adept at the writing of love letters—not so much as a single word did he allow to show through."

"*Pherebee!*" protested Alice, scandalized as always by the greater candor of her sister.

"'Tis too long a tale to tell just now," said Meggy easily. "Oh, me, I wish my hair would curl as yours does!"

Heavy footsteps on the porch below sent Pherebee scurrying to the looking glass to harry the cluster of curls on her neck into an attitude of yet greater naturalness, Cousin David quite forgotten.

"Do you remember Mr. MacLaine, Meggy?" whispered Alice on the stairs. "He's a captain now!"

The house was full of officers. Swords. Punch. Compliments. Laughter. Deep voices. Vows without number. Mrs. Clayton sat beaming and knitting in the midst of the din, while her husband and her daughters each had an admiring little circle about them. Meggy broke away from an infantile ensign who had had more sangaree than was good for him, and darted out through the side door. Tibbie was waiting for her, and together through the dusk they walked to the store of Messrs. Campbell and Hogg where Ewan had promised to wait.

He had evidently been watching for them, for at their approach the door opened.

"Come in. I haven't lit a candle, for there's no use to attract attention. Is anything wrong, Meggy?"

His face was white in the dimness, and so thin that his eyes seemed to be set at the bottom of great pools. Meggy was startled to see him.

"Poor Ewan!" she said. "No, nothing is wrong. I'm on my way—you are sure nobody can hear what is said? —I'm on my way to the back country at last, and I need your help."

"You are still clinging to that notion? I suppose you will be as safe there as anywhere. There is sure to be fighting here. Have you found an escort at last?"

Meggy told him of David's letter. He was surprised. "He did that for you, Whig that he is?" He peered at Meggy through the darkness as though he were seeing a new person. "Dod, Meggy, he must be taken with you. Mistress Pherebee said he was, but——" he stopped.

"But you did not think it possible?" Meggy finished for him with a little smile. "No, I do not see how he could be taken with me. He is simply a kind lad who keeps his promises. I cannot stay long, Ewan. Any moment I may be missed and I am sure to be questioned when I return. You know Dr. Cobbitt, don't you? Can you see him and persuade him to let you see Captain MacLeod? Then you could ask him to let me go with him. Tell him that I have a maid and a horse, and that I shall try not to be a burden to him."

"Aye, I know Dr. Cobbitt. We have been through bitter times together. I'll see him, Meggy, and try to

arrange a meeting for you with this Captain MacLeod. You had best plead for yourself—it will have more effect. Everyone seems eager to do things for you. I have no weight with any of them."

He was more despondent than Meggy had yet seen him. She forgot her own affairs in seeking some word of comfort for him.

"They made me sign their association, Meggy!" he burst out. "I had sworn that I would not do it. A company of militia took us all prisoners—Dr. Cobbitt, Samuel Williams, Mr. Campbell, and a number of other loyal merchants and planters. We were held all night and threatened—and in the morning we signed a paper saying that we would support the Continental Association. I despise myself, Meggy. The other men say it was signed under compulsion, and means nothing at all, but it seems to me that a pledge is inviolable. I should have held out though they killed me for it!"

It had been a bitter moment for Ewan when he looked within and found himself less shining than he had supposed.

"You must get back. I'll walk home with you, for the town is full of militia and Tibbie is small protection." As they had done that evening in March, which seemed so far past, they closed the shop and started out together, Tibbie in their wake instead of Cuffey. There was a difference in the shop, too. It had dwindled pitifully. Mr. Hogg had gone back to Scotland, no new

goods had been imported, it was hard for Loyalists to get much of the native products, and Mr. Campbell and Ewan had done little enough business.

"Ewan," said Meggy suddenly, "why don't you go back? You would not like America at its best, and it is at its worst—for you—right now."

"Go back?" repeated Ewan, all the more indignantly, Meggy suspected, because the idea had already occurred to him and tempted him. "Go back a failure, like a dog with his head drooping and his tail between his legs? It's only a matter of holding on for a time," he said, drawing on some unsuspected reserve of resolution within him. "After the King has settled the colonists I shall step in and make my fortune. But I would give ten years of my life not to have signed their wretched association."

They had reached the back alley that led into the Claytons' garden. "You had better leave me here," said Meggy softly. "You will see Dr. Cobbitt—at once?"

"I'll find a way to get a message to you. Meggy, you are sure you wish to go into the back country? It is less civilized than Wilmington. Dod, Meggy"—he spoke in the tone of one who has made a new and amazing discovery—"it will be even worse here after you are gone!"

No message came that night. Meggy sat through the long evening, straining her ears to catch every slightest

sound. The scratching of a bush against the windowpane, a footstep outside, the noise of talking in the servants' quarters, all made her suddenly tense, waiting, hoping. For minutes at a time she would be silent, and then, suddenly fearing that people would think her silence odd, she would begin to chatter with a forced vivacity that was far more unlike her than the silence.

"Meggy is in love," said Pherebee teasingly.

"And high time, too," said Alice. "You are turned sixteen now, are you not, Meggy?"

She was afraid they would question her closely when they went to bed, but she need not have worried, for each wanted to talk to Meggy of her own affairs of the heart. A perfunctory query, easily evaded, satisfied their curiosity about Meggy, and they were off about their captains. At length, worn out by the ride and the strain of the day's events, Meggy went to sleep, with Alice babbling about Captain Moore in one ear, and Pherebee wondering in the other if Captain Waddell could have meant that speech as it sounded.

At ten the next morning Ewan came boldly to call upon her. Alice and Pherebee, Meggy noticed, were distinctly cool in their manner toward him; they had given up hope of converting him. He was dressed with care, and the ruffles which Meggy had darned were freshly laundered. He was, in his turn, formally polite to the Misses Clayton, and to Meggy a trifle condescending in his old way. No one looking at his charming and ele-

gant figure would ever have suspected his bitter confession in the twilight: "Meggy, I despise myself." In Edinburgh Meggy had admired him extravagantly, and worshiped him as a sort of reincarnation of the Bonny Prince; later she pitied his disappointment; now, seeing the lines in his thin face, she found a new respect for him.

"I've come to carry Meggy off for a stroll," he said calmly, and Meggy was sure that he had managed to do what she had asked.

"Will he take me?" she whispered eagerly as soon as they were out of earshot of the porch.

Ewan only shrugged his shoulders and hummed:

> "'When Meggy and me were acquent,
> I carried my noddle fu' high.'

We'll turn down toward the river," he broke off to say.

They started in the direction of the river but turned off on Front Street. "Over there," said Ewan, indicating a two-storey red brick house, "is Dr. Cobbitt's residence. You had better go in by yourself."

Meggy went slowly up the flight of steps from the street. A thin little kitten with a black nose, asleep in a patch of sunlight, woke and stretched and came toward her, purring so loudly that its whole little body seemed to vibrate. Meggy lifted the door knocker, let it fall once, and waited.

In the street below, an officer dressed in buff breeches

and a blue coat turned back with buff, sword at his side and a silver crescent in his hat, walked past, and slowed his pace to look curiously at Meggy. Ewan, sauntering, had turned into Princess Street, and nothing showed of him but the gleam of his white silk stockings through the lower branches of a magnolia tree.

The kitten rubbed against Meggy's ankles. Should she knock again? She strained her ears to catch a sound within. What had Miss Cameron said of Flora MacDonald's son-in-law? Retired officer of the marines. At least forty-five. Anne MacDonald could not be more than twenty, or at the most . . .

"Come in. Come in."

The kitten scooted ahead of her through the partly open door. Meggy, feeling like a conspirator, slipped in sidewise and the door was shut after her.

It was dim inside, to eyes accustomed to the dazzling October sunlight out of doors. Dr. Cobbitt, elderly and gaunt, peered down his nose at her through square-framed spectacles. Without saying anything, he took his hand from the door knob and motioned her toward the parlor.

"You are Miss MacIntosh?" He barely opened his mouth when he spoke, and his words sounded as if they had been squeezed and flattened in the difficult process of getting out. His inflections were English and quick, and Meggy, used to the mellower Scottish tones and the slow American drawl, nervously wondered if she would

be able to understand all that he said. "You must tell me by whom you were informed of Mr. MacLeod's presence here."

Meggy hesitated. Must she risk getting David Macolm into trouble?

"I have been told that it was a Whig," said Dr. Cobbitt with a touch of impatience. "It is essential that we sift this matter out and make certain that Mr. MacLeod is not walking into a trap."

"My dear Cobbitt." A new voice was added to the discussion, a quiet voice with the unmistakable Scottish twist. "My dear Cobbitt, I think ye arre over-cautious. We ken a'ready 'twas a lad in Cross Creek sent worrd to Miss MacIntosh. Nae doot my mission is known and talked of frae Mt. Pleasant tae Campbellton. We are more open and friendly in the back country. There is nae trap waiting for me there, and as for here, I came down to the *Cruizer* and up into your city of Wilmington without harrm, and I must juist tak' my chances of getting oot again."

A pleasant and leisurely gentleman, not given to nervousness, was Meggy's first impression. She raised her eyes and studied him, smiling to see the kitten perched upon his broad shoulder. His face, below his neat wig, was weather-beaten as a man's is who has lived his life in the wind and the rain and the sunshine. His eyes, somewhat small, were blue and faintly amused; they looked, thought Meggy a trifle uncomfortably, as though

they pierced one through and through and found one's inmost thoughts a little heated and absurd. His nose was long and at the tip it suddenly flared upward.

"Weel," said he, "and what do you mak' of me?"

Meggy realized that for a full moment there had been silence while she stared. "I was just noticing," she said, thinking more of her hot cheeks than of what she was saying, "that you have a scoopy nose too." In explanation, her finger followed the line of her own nose, which felt, as she looked up at the captain's, reassuringly small.

The captain laughed. "That seems to me a wee bit like comparing a tea cup wi' a caldron—both something the same shape but a little difference in the size. So you're the lass that cam' all the way frae Edinburgh tae see Flory MacDonald? And ye wish me tae tak' ye to her?"

"It would be sheer folly to do it, sir," protested Dr. Cobbitt. "You will travel with vastly greater speed and greater safety too if you travel unencumbered by a female. Why, she is scarcely more than a child."

"'Tis a small package, 'tis true, to hold so much determination, but there's nae waste in a wee bundle. Flory MacDonald is no' large hersel'. And, man, I couldna face my wife and her mother if I had a chance to bring back the lass they've heard about and didna dae't." He turned to Meggy, who had been looking anxiously from one to the other. "Now think it ower,

dae ye really wish tae go? 'Tis a long ride, and a hard ride, and we'll ha'e tae go fast. Beyond that, it's no' a safe ride. Do ye ken that last July a messenger to Kingsburgh wi' papers frae the governor was set upon by Whigs and his horse stolen, his traveling bags ransacked and his papers ta'en, and himself beaten into the bargain? 'Tis the simple truth. I'm no' exaggeratin' tae frighten ye. Ye must know what ye may be going into."

Those rather small blue eyes were boring into her; if there were any fear within her, Meggy knew they would find it.

"I still wish to go," she said steadily. "I have a horse and a maidservant of my own, and I will try not to be a trouble to you."

Captain MacLeod pulled the kitten down from his shoulder and cradled it in his big hand. "Very well, then," he said. "To-morrow to all strangers we shall be Mr. Angus MacLeod and his daughter fresh off the *George* from Scotland—'tis in the river now wi' 172 new emigrants. And that"—to Dr. Cobbitt—"is no' a bad idea to hand to any suspicious gentry." He turned back to Meggy. "D' ye add early rising tae your list of virtues and accomplishments? I'll be crossing to Negro Head Point before daylight, and if ye wish to go wi' me ye must be at the ferry by half-past four. Mind, now, not a minute later."

Like a cloud of mosquitoes the difficulties in the way rose up and buzzed in Meggy's head: to slip away from

Alice and Pherebee (last night she had slept in the same bed with them, in the middle), to saddle her horse, to come to the ferry landing without attracting anyone's notice.

"I'll be there, sir," she said firmly. She had come so far; there must be a way to go yet farther.

"'Tis against my advice," croaked Dr. Cobbitt.

"I'm taking the risk," said Captain MacLeod.

Meggy drew a long breath. Seven months had she been in North Carolina. To-morrow to the back country and Flora MacDonald!

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH MEGGY RIDES AWAY AT DAWN

FACED one by one, the difficulties, as difficulties have a way of doing, looked much less formidable. Ewan took charge of Whitey, under pretense of taking him to the blacksmith to have a shoe tightened, and promised to bring him, saddled, to the ferry landing next morning. The little side door of the Clayton house, Meggy knew, was rarely locked. Tibbie, who proved to have unsuspected forethought and acumen, discovered that it squeaked in the opening and volunteered to watch her chance to oil its latch and hinges. There remained only to find some reasons for sleeping by herself in the spare chamber instead of sharing Alice's and Pherebee's bed as she usually did. Meggy racked her brain, and found the excuse that is forever plausible. She was seized with a blinding, a positively devastating, headache.

It was the more convincing that it kept her from a pleasure party to Greenfield Lake. It was a pretty spot, that lake, and, when the weather was, like to-day, sunshiny without being either too warm or too cool, it was ideal for light-hearted expeditions. Around its

edges cypress trees stood knee-deep in water, with long gray veils of Spanish moss drooping from their branches. A flat-bottomed boat and a canoe or two were tied up to the little wharf. At night the moon rose out of its deepest cove and shimmered over the still water. The expeditions were all the same. Negro servants went ahead to set up tables and "bowers" and prepare the collation; the ladies and gentlemen followed; there was laughter and much admiration of Nature, some flirting, some eating; a few daring souls ventured out on the lake in the boat or the canoe, several of the ladies stood on the little landing and looked with pretty terror into the clear water colored brown by the cypress needles. By nine o'clock they were home again.

Alice and Pherebee were in high feather. The barber had come in the forenoon to dress their hair. Powdered and frizzled in high rolls, it looked uncomfortable enough, but they were blissful over its effect. For the rest, they were gotten up for a country festivity, in gauze petticoats lined and banded with tiffitie, and lace-trimmed chintz sacques, leghorn hats atop the barber's masterpieces, high-heeled slippers on their feet. They went off between two swains, and their regret that Meggy was so ill fluttered back behind them.

From the second-storey balcony Meggy watched the party start off. They gathered at the Moore house on the corner. The ladies, flounces, furbelows, high heads, and all, crowded into two phaëtons, the gentlemen were on

horseback. Mr. Howe of Howe's Point drove his chaise, with two horses tandem, in the manner of a young and sporting gentleman. As the second phaëton got under way a white handkerchief jerking convulsively from the window told Meggy that Pherebee had remembered to wave farewell to her. Dear Pherebee!

Meggy went back to the darkened spare chamber and the appurtenances of her headache. Mrs. Clayton herself brought her some peppermint tea in a china cup and stood over her while she drank it. It was steaming hot and its pungent fumes went up the back of her nose and made her choke. She was ashamed to think that she was leaving her kind friends in such a clandestine way, sneaking out before dawn through the side door without saying farewell or thank you to anybody, and each fresh evidence of their friendliness—Pherebee's jerking handkerchief or her mother's well-meant, nasty tea—added to her remorse.

She was supposed to be asleep. The room was quiet and the shutters were bowed. A thin slit of sunshine fell across the drugget on the floor and touched the bed. Meggy lay and watched it gradually growing thinner and longer, slanting away from the bed toward the dressing table. She thought of the gay party at Greenfield Lake; she thought of Mrs. Clayton and her solicitude; she pictured the consternation of the Clayton family when they should wake the next morning and find that their malingering guest had vanished in the

night without a word. She would ask Ewan to come to see them and explain. If only they liked Ewan as they liked her, if only they would be kind to him in his loneliness. She thought of the morrow and wondered if Whitey would be fast enough—broad-backed Whitey who was not really so old, only well fed and lazy. She hoped Tibbie would be able to ride pillion all day without being too fatigued. She tried to picture Cross Creek, the trading town in the back country. "Our house is situate near the Cool Spring."

The wind whipped around the corner of the house and blew one shutter wide open, flashing sun into the room, and then whacked it shut again. Glad for the excuse to get off the bed, Meggy rose to fasten the blind and stood looking out. Over the peaked shingled roofs and brick chimneys of the town she saw the river. The flat ferryboat was slowly moving up toward Negro Head Point, where the river separated into Northeast and Northwest branches. From there a road went up into the back country.

Meggy was afraid to go to sleep that night lest she should not wake up in time. She heard eleven strike, and twelve. Then, her eyelids intolerably heavy and her brain wandering off into the most absurd little bypaths, she fell into a heavy sleep, and woke with a jerk to listen in an agony of suspense for a single stroke that might be one—or the half hour after four. The room was dark and, except for the muttering of the rising wind outside,

absolutely still. Tibbie, who slept on the settee to minister to her pain, might not have been there, so quiet she was.

A century passed and the clock struck three. A whole hour! Meggy sat up, and the ropes under the mattress tightened and squeaked; the sound, to her tense ears, seemed loud enough to wake the household. She remained propped up against the pillows in order not to fall asleep again, and spent the hour intermittently composing well-phrased messages to send to the Claytons by Ewan (the beginning forgotten before the end was reached) and in worrying over the question whether Tibbie had put into her bag the scarlet thread hose which Miss Cameron had given her. It seemed of a sudden vitally important that she should have those stockings in Cross Creek.

Before the last stroke of four had sounded Meggy was out of bed and noiselessly fumbling for her clothes. In another moment Tibbie was awake too. It had turned cold; Meggy was glad of that. Her green riding joseph had been insufferably warm yesterday. She buttoned the last button with cold fingers just as Tibbie finished cramming her night-rail and cap into the bag and clasped it. Scarcely daring to breathe, feeling unspeakably guilty, they stole down the stairs and out through the side door.

It was night in the garden. The air was cold and damp, the darkness hung before them like a curtain. Meggy

held out her hand to ward off obstacles, took a cautious step forward; she felt as though she were going to step off the edge of something. A dog barked, and she stood still, hot all over.

Tibbie went ahead. She knew the back way through to Second Street.

It was lighter out in the street away from the dense magnolia trees. Overhead in the sky were moving wind clouds and a scattering of pale stars. They stepped lightly, fearing to hear the sound of their own footfalls. Once Tibbie dropped the bag, and Meggy thought all was lost. It was strange to be out alone in the dark and the stillness; she felt the sleeping houses all about her.

The ferryboat was tied up to its landing. At first Meggy could see no one. Was she early—or too late? Then she smelled the faint odor of horse, and looked about for Whitey. Something moved in the shadow of a warehouse, and a man came toward her. Ewan.

"I brought the black for you," he said in a low voice. "Whitey's too slow. You cannot afford to be left behind, and Captain MacLeod will not wish to wait."

"Your black horse? Oh, Ewan!" That Ewan should let her have the beautiful animal that he had purchased with so much pride and ridden all through the unhappy summer!

"I'll get him some time, and till then I can ride Whitey. Trained down and groomed, he'd not be an ill-looking beast."

She tried to protest, but he pointed out that it was too late to change; tried to thank him, but he would have none of it.

"He's gentle as a lamb," he whispered. "You needn't be afraid of him."

What had happened to Captain MacLeod? Ewan drew her back into the shadows, and they waited, talking in wispy voices about nothing in particular, growing more nervous by the minute.

"Ewan, I can't take your horse——"

"'Tis nothing, Meggy. I'm cutting no swathe as a macaroni these days. Did you go on that expedition to the lake yesterday?"

"I—had a headache."

"Dod, Meggy, what would I not give to be entering the Assembly room in Edinburgh with a coat tailored by Murdochson on my back—or just to be walking in the haar on the Cannongate, for the matter of that!"

It was gray now; she could see his dim face. She put her hand on his arm. "Ewan," she said, "go back to Edinburgh."

He shook it off impatiently. "Here comes MacLeod," he said.

Meggy had not heard the footsteps. Captain MacLeod was on a horse that seemed enormous; the ferryman and his rowers followed him.

"I knew these fellows wouldn't get here unless I pulled them out," he said, without troubling to lower

his voice. "All right, Miss Meggy, on time, I see. Where's your nag? We have no minutes to lose."

His own horse stepped onto the ferryboat without hesitation; Ewan's Roderick had to be coaxed. The boat was moving.

"Ewan, *be careful.*'"

He jumped for the landing. "Farewell, Meggy, take care of yourself."

She watched him through the gray light till he was but a blur among the shadows, and turned to find Captain MacLeod looking down at her.

"He gave me his horse," she said unsteadily.

"Good horse. Good lad," replied the captain.

The wind was in their faces; a bit of wet spray dashed up against Meggy's cheek. She looked to her saddle girths, saw that Tibbie's pillion was in its place behind the saddle. Tibbie was rapturously stroking Roderick's satin nose.

"Ye'll have had no breakfast?" said Captain MacLeod.

No breakfast, and very little—because of her headache—supper the night before. Meggy thought of her flight from Edinburgh and the twenty-four hours that passed before she tasted food. She smiled. "I never eat when I run away, sir," she said.

"When ye run away with me ye eat." He handed her a package done up in a napkin. Two layers of bread with ham between, and a couple of seed cakes. Meggy

shared it with Tibbie, who professed complete lack of appetite, but ate hungrily when it was forced upon her.

They were both thankful to have had it after two or three hours on horseback. Roderick proved to have a delightfully easy gait, and the morning was cold enough to be invigorating. But still, as red splashes in the eastern sky behind them succeeded the luminous gray and day came on with sunshine slanting in shafts through the tops of the trees overhead and at length dipping down to touch the dew on the ferns underfoot, they began to feel the first strain of the journey. The sandy road led on and on, now through forest where oak trees burned a deep fiery red and the thin leaves of elms came fluttering down in yellow drifts; now over a causeway through a cypress swamp, where the gray moss swayed mistily; now past the flat earthy brown fields of a rice plantation; then into the forest again. There were birds: a jay, in his brilliant blue and white, squawking from a hickory tree, a buzzard wheeling overhead, a flock of wild turkeys, gobbling and pushing in the underbrush, a tiny black and white bird running head first down a tree. Once they saw a red fox dive off the road ahead of them, and once they smelled a bear. They met few people. They passed a traveling pewter maker with his molds, and wished him good-day; they drew their horses off the road in a narrow place to give room for a chaise to get by; a wagon piled with what looked like

tiny snowballs left a trail of white in its wake. Meggy was curious about the last.

"Cotton," said Captain MacLeod. "A most impractical crop. It takes a vast amount of time to clean it from the husk and seeds. Though if ever they should find a way to do it with more speed it would be a dangerous rival to our Scottish linen."

Captain MacLeod rode ahead, and Meggy, with Tibbie holding tight to the bar of her pillion, followed close behind. They were not riding fast, but they kept up a steady pace that would have worn out Whitey in the first two hours. Meggy was thankful for Roderick. When the sun climbed higher in the sky Captain MacLeod relaxed his pace and fell back to ride beside Meggy.

"Hoding up?" he questioned her briefly.

When she replied, a little breathlessly, that she was, he said nothing more. They rode on for five miles, perhaps, before he spoke again.

"A few days hence," he said, "this road and the other road from Brunswick will doubtless be full of emigrants. One hundred and seventy-two of them upon the ship *George* just arrived in the river two days since. Poor devils!"

Meggy felt that the tense question in Tibbie's mind was: "From what part of Scotland do they come?"

"The Western Isles. Chiefly MacDonalds and MacLeods. Poor and trusting—and loyal. I gave most of my

funds in hand to help them, and keep them loyal. And I doot it will be many a long day before I can wring reimbursement oot o' the government. His Excellency saw to it that the ship did not pass the *Cruizer* without all the men taking the Oath of Allegiance. They'll get to Cross Creek in time tae join the Highland regiment."

"Governor Martin made them take the Oath of Allegiance before they landed?" repeated Meggy. "But they have not seen this country yet. How can they tell how they will feel toward it? They may not wish to fight against it after they have been here for a time."

"Aye, that is exactly the contingency that His Excellency is endeavoring to forestall," admitted Flora MacDonald's son-in-law composedly.

"But it is not fair!"

"Perhaps not, perhaps not. It's war, lass, and besides, 'tis best for them in the long run. There's nought to be gained by fighting against the King. Look at Culloden, and the fate that they had who fought against the King there."

Meggy was silent. She was thinking of that terrible oath, and of the men who had been compelled to swear. Exhausted by the long voyage across the ocean they must have been, and braced for the difficult task of making a home and a living for their families in this strange new land where most folk knew not their Gaelic tongue. How those cutting phrases must seem to have been coined for them . . . "May I be killed in battle as a

coward, and lie . . . in a strange land far from the graves of my forefathers and kindred . . . if I break my oath." It was bad enough to force such an oath upon people when both sides were hysterical after a daring and almost successful uprising, but to revive it after nearly thirty years and fasten it like fetters upon men standing on the threshold of a new life—it is not fair, thought Meggy hotly, it is not fair!

She forgot about the emigrants, however, in her own distress of body. They had been riding for hours and hours, stopping only for the briefest breathing spaces, and now she ached in every joint. How was she to get through the afternoon? And what about to-morrow?

Captain MacLeod reined in his horse. "There'll be a spring in here somewhere," he said. "We'll rest a bit."

Meggy slid off her horse, and then had to hold on tightly to the saddle to keep herself from falling. She felt weak and dizzy.

"Are ye all right?" whispered Tibbie anxiously. "Tak' hold o' me."

A long drink at the spring, some cornbread and cheese out of the captain's knapsack, and a nap on the grass with her head in the shade of a sweet gum tree and her feet in the sunshine so far restored her that she declared that she was ready to ride all night. The horses, fed and watered, were fresher too. They mounted once more and started off into the afternoon.

Here and there were clearings checkered over with

black stumps, now and then a log house, its clay-daubed walls dabbled with a pattern of shade and sunshine. They came to a little height of land, and saw below it a narrow bridge over a twisting creek.

"Widow Moore's Creek bridge," said Captain MacLeod.

In the Black River region there were rich meadow lands and black cattle, an occasional house with unpainted clapboards over the logs, or more frequently, back from the road, a curling feather of smoke among the trees.

And again sunshine in long slanting rays in the trees above their heads. The breath of the evening stole out of the woods. Somewhere, surely, they must stop for supper and a bed. Or were they going to ride all night? Roderick stumbled twice; his flanks were lathered; his head drooped.

"Lean back against me," whispered Tibbie. "I'm no' sae weary as you."

Because she had promised that she would be no trouble, and had asserted confidently that she did not mind the long ride, Meggy set her lips and stiffened her aching back. She picked out the straight gray bole of a tulip poplar ahead. I'll not fall off till I get to that, she said to herself; and when that was behind her she chose a peeling cedar trunk. It was cold. The air smelled of the dry leaves that rustled and crackled beneath the horses' feet.

A wagon track darted off to the right and lost itself among the trees.

"That will be the road to Wullie Shaw's," said Captain MacLeod. "We'll sleep with him."

Wullie Shaw had chosen a lonely spot for his home. It seemed to Meggy that they rode for miles through the dusk. Now and then a tree flung out thin stinging fingers and scratched her face. Once Tibbie reached up and broke a bunch of fox grapes from a vine swinging overhead. They were small and sour, but refreshing. In their ears all the time was the tremulous, almost human cry of a screech owl.

"Tae make an owl stop hooting," said Tibbie huskily, "ye should tak' aff your shoes and place them on the ground sole upward, and then pit your feet upon them."

Roderick stumbled again, and automatically Meggy's tired hands tightened on the reins and pulled him up. Captain MacLeod looked around.

"Puir beast," he said. "Puir lass. We're a'most there. I smell wood smoke on the air now."

It was almost dark when they reached the little house in its clearing. A dog set up a barking at their approach; they heard voices. The house, which was small, was built of logs, with a rough stone chimney at each end. A door in the center opened and a big man came out. Behind him were the light and warmth of the kitchen. A little girl came and stood in the doorway.

"Wullie! How are ye, mon? I'm on my way back

from Wilmington. Can ye put us up for the night?"

"Weel, weel, Captain MacLeod, I'm real pleased tae see ye. Ye ken what we have tae offer. We'll dae oor best tae mak' ye comfortable. Is't Mrs. MacLeod wi' ye? Na, na, I see." He peered at Meggy, and the captain introduced her. "'Tis a pleasure to see ye, ma'am. Tammas. Jenny."

Tammas took the horses, and Jenny, who was his wife, came out to add her welcome.

The kitchen was evidently the largest room of the house. At one end a fireplace five feet wide provided light and heat; a black kettle on the crane was outlined against the blaze of the fire. Pewter gleamed on shelves against the wall. There was a rocking chair near the fire, and a spinning wheel in a corner. From the beams overhead, half in shadow and half lit by the red glow of the fire, hung strings of red peppers, ears of corn, shapeless bags containing Meggy knew not what. The floor was neatly sanded, and felt gritty under Meggy's feet. The little girl who had come to the doorway retreated shyly to the hearth, where she turned her back and vigorously stirred something in a wooden bowl. A lanky lad brought in a pail of water and sprinkled a bit of it at the girl, who hunched her shoulders and said, "Don't Rob, I'm busy." Outside two boyish voices talked shrilly about the horses.

The mother, a wiry little woman, quick in all her movements, put Meggy into the rocking chair. "Now

just you sit here beside the fire," she said, "while I get supper ready. And then after you've got something hot inside of you, you can go to bed. Don't try to talk, just sit and get a bit of rest."

So Meggy sat in the deep rocker, with her eyes half closed, while the bustle of supper getting went on all around her. She heard snatches of talk, and soon sniffed the comforting fragrance of hot food.

After some hot corn pone and butter, a bowl of stew, and a taste of homemade persimmon beer (an odd, sour, heady drink which she did not care for) Meggy felt warmed and strengthened. She listened with interest to the talk that went on, and hoped to hear mention of Flora MacDonald. It came at last, when Mrs. Shaw had a free moment to join in.

"And how did you leave the laird?" she inquired. The laird, of course, was Flora's husband. "And his lady? And your own good lady?"

"They are all in good health. They think of nothing but the Highland regiment. Kingsburgh had thought tae be general, and I had hoped for something higher than a captain mysel', but General Gage has sent General Donald MacDonald, late frae the battle of Bunker Hill, to command the regiment, and so we must e'en be content wi' that. He's a veteran, and a fine man. Flory MacDonald is giving her whole self tae the cause; she goes aboot through the countryside on her white horse and talks tae the people in their houses and cabins.

She has the Gaelic, and they hear her word as if it came from above. Anne would go wi' her, but she hasna the strength for it."

Mrs. Shaw, Meggy thought, had no great liking for this talk of regiments and battle. She turned to the personal. "You've not been married long, you and Anne MacDonald?"

"Juist seven months to-day," said Anne's husband with some satisfaction.

Wullie Shaw winked at his wife, and then looked solemn. "Ye'll no' have had time yet tae lose your spirit," he said.

Mrs. Shaw carried Meggy away to bed early. The men, sitting before the fire with their pipes, slipped easily into Gaelic, and Tibbie crouched on a low stool in a corner and listened enraptured to the sound of her own tongue. The three lads whispered together on a bench, and the eldest one was whittling something. The little girl followed her mother and Meggy into the other room.

It was dark until Mrs. Shaw flung a handful of light-wood into the fireplace and the resinous sticks blazed up. There were two beds, obviously of home manufacture, but polished and rubbed till they shone in the firelight. A big wooden chest, a little red leather trunk studded with brass nails, a stool or two completed the furniture.

"I don't like to hear Will talking Gaelic," said Mrs. Shaw, pulling blankets and brown Osenbrigg sheets out

of the chest. "It gets him too excited. He'll think of nothing but Scotland's glory and Scotland's past for days to come. It was all right when everything was quiet, but now that there's talk of war and a Highland army gathering up yonder in the pines, I don't like it. I was born and raised in this province, and I don't want my man to be fighting against my own country. We'll put the men folks to sleep up in the loft with the boys, and you and me and Sally here, and your Tibbie can sleep in this room. Now you just go ahead and get into bed. You look tired to death."

Unspeakably weary, and so stiff in every muscle that even the feather bed hurt her, Meggy lay for what seemed a long time and listened to the crackle and snap of logs and the murmur of voices in the other room. She was asleep, though, before her roommates came to bed, and she did not wake in the morning until after everyone else was up. Tibbie brought her a basin of water and a coarse towel and helped her to dress.

"It hurts like anything to move," she gasped, laughing at herself as she slowly sat up and stretched one foot out of the bed. "Oh! Ouch! Are you so sore, Tibbie?"

"I'm a wee bit stiff," admitted Tibbie, kneeling to put Meggy's stockings on. "But I think I'm tougher than you. I've worked in the fields in Scotland."

The sun was well above the trees when they left, and there was frost on the grass, a white coating of it on the brown leaves on the ground. Mrs. Shaw had been at

work two hours or more. Meggy felt sorry for her. She had labored to bring up her children and make a home in this remote place. Old at forty, she had given her youth and her courage to the task, Scotland had helped her not one whit, yet now she faced the possibility of seeing her husband go out to fight, not for the land which gave them their home and their children, but for the glory of Scotland across the ocean and an English king of German descent.

To Meggy's relief after an hour or so the second day proved to be easier than the first. She was more accustomed to the saddle; the sound night's sleep and the hot breakfast had done her good. Furthermore, they rode more slowly and rested oftener.

There were few inns in this country. Blount's Ordinary at Corbett's Ferry was the only one along the road. They had planned to rest and refresh themselves there, but when they reached it a crowd of the militia were watering their horses and calling for wine for themselves, and Captain MacLeod thought it best to push on.

The afternoon wore away. They were in the pines now; mile after mile of tall straight trunks went past. It was clean growth; there was nothing beneath the trees but the reddish pine straw. They rode steadily on. Nothing varied the monotony but an occasional deer vanishing among the sun-flecked tree trunks, or a clearing where men had boxed the pines for turpentine. Meggy was tired again, and the monotony of the scene,

the long slow swell of the wind in the pines, the steady pace of Roderick beneath her made her desperately sleepy. She felt as if she had spent a lifetime riding, riding, miles and miles from anywhere, through endless forests.

Captain MacLeod had told her that they would sleep that night at Robert Rowles's, but when at sundown they came upon the clearing where his house had stood they found two stone chimneys standing naked against the sky, with a pile of charred rubbish between them. A giant pine that had grown beside the door was burned all up one side.

"Fire," said Captain MacLeod. "Eh, sirs, I am sorry for that. Puir Rob, he could ill afford it. 'Tis sad when ten years of a man's life burns to the ground before his eyes. 'Twas our night's lodging, too." He turned and looked keenly at Meggy. "Puir lass, you are in no shape to ride fifteen or twenty miles more to a bed. Let us look about and see what shelter we can find."

They dismounted and tied their horses to a tree. They found the well, and the smokehouse unharmed, and beyond a pile of ashes that must have been the barn a narrow log structure seven or eight feet high which Captain MacLeod said was the crib. It had a square opening above the ground, and proved to be empty except for an old mill sack or two upon the floor.

Meggy and Tibbie slept in the crib, squeezed close together for warmth, with the rough sacks under them

and their coats and Tibbie's plaid spread over them. Captain MacLeod built a fire outside and, rolled in his plaid, slept beside it. At dawn it rained; fat drops splashed on the roof of the cribhouse and sizzled on the fire outside.

Meggy was cramped and chilled to the bone. She was glad when they were on their way again, although her stiff fingers could scarcely hold the reins and her aching body swayed. The rain dripped steadily through the pines; the branches with their weight of long needles nodded mournfully. They stopped at a tiny log cabin for breakfast and were given bowls of steaming porridge by a lonely, bearded old man who spoke only Gaelic. Long before noon Meggy was picking out trees again, promising herself not to fall off until she had reached the sapling ahead, the great tree on the left, the one at the bend of the road.

Before Captain MacLeod told her so, Meggy knew that they were at last approaching Cross Creek. They passed a wide lumbering freighter's wagon on the road. Clearings were more numerous, houses more frequent. Through an opening in the trees they caught a glimpse of the Cape Fear, a flat trading boat and a long canoe apparently motionless on its brown surface.

The town itself was situated about a mile from the river at the point where the two streams, Cross Creek and Blount's Creek, came together and, some maintained, crossed each other.

They entered it along a wide street that led to some kind of public square. Through the rain and her own dizziness Meggy received an impression of people and activity. In the square were trading wagons like the one they had passed on the road; the wide street seemed to be lined with shops—here a tanner, there a smith, a wheelwright's sign, a merchant's. A lady wearing goloshoes and carrying a big umbrella picked her way along, followed by a little darky with a basket. Men in kilts saluted Captain MacLeod.

"We'll go to my good friend Mrs. Rutherford in Maiden Lane," said he, "and there ye can rest. 'Tis twenty miles more tae Killiegray."

Mrs. Rutherford's house was a plain, square building, of gray clapboards with a shingled roof. It stood in a little yard with a paling fence around it and a tall tree nodding over its chimney. Pale yellow leaves drifted down through the rain. A yellow rose blossomed by the doorstep.

Captain MacLeod lifted Meggy from her horse, and, after a glance at her face, carried her up the path to the house. Inside there was a fire and what seemed to be a great many faces and voices. Meggy, set upon her feet again, leaned against the door frame and tried, through the ringing in her ears and the mist in her eyes, to understand what was being said to her. But now the faces and the voices both disappeared and she felt herself falling through a black mist.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH MEGGY SUFFERS FROM AUTUMN FEVER

SOMETHING was chasing Meggy. Something round and soft. She was too frightened to run. It grew bigger and bigger until it was all around her like a suffocating black mist, and then suddenly it shrank away to something round and soft again, and climbed under her tongue. She shuddered all over, so that her whole body jerked, and opened her eyes.

The black thing was gone, and a face hung in the air above her. It was a pleasant face. It said something to her over and over; she thought it wanted her to open her mouth, so she opened it, and something cool and a little bitter fell on her tongue and trickled down her chin into her neck. . . .

It was strange to be so hot. Once, a long time ago, she had been very cold, but now she was burning up. She would endure it until she reached the shiny brown tree. The shiny brown tree stayed just beyond her reach. If she could just touch it she would not be so hot. . . .

The round thing was chasing her. It swelled and

swelled; it rang in her ears; it was gathering itself together to climb under her tongue when she jerked and woke up. This time there was no face. She closed her eyes and moved a little. She found a cooler place to lie on; she pressed her cheek against it. . . .

She was riding through the trees. Enormous trees. Some of them had blue eyes that looked scornfully at her. She kept on riding. The trees came closer and tried to scrape her off her horse. She raised her arm to ward them off. Something light and cool settled on her forehead. She opened her eyes to see the face again. Everything went away—the round thing, the trees—and only the face stayed, and the cool pressure on her forehead. The face kept the other things away. She lay very still. Once she closed her eyes and opened them quickly to see if the face was still there. It was. She felt safe. She closed her eyes again. . . .

The bed had chintz curtains. She must remember that. That was something real. There was a network of thin little brown vines, and over it a heavier green vine with flowers on it. A little yellow bud, and then a reddish flower like a bell, and then a wee blue flower. When the sun shone through the little brown vines did not show at all; the green vine looked black, but the yellow bud, the reddish flower, and the tiny blue flower looked brighter than ever. She went to sleep, and when she woke, with hardly any jerk at all, the curtains were still there; this time she noticed that they had fringe

on them. The sun was no longer shining, and the little flowers on their vine looked dim.

Someone was trying to build a fire, very quietly. Meggy could not see her, but she could hear the slow muffled motions. She heard the rustle of little sticks, and the gentle thud of a log as it was eased into place, the faint squeak and whisper of the hand bellows. The little sticks flared up and crackled; a glow shone on the curtains of the bed. Someone tiptoed over the floor.

Tibbie. Poor Tibbie must have been ill, she looked so white and drawn. Meggy tried to say something cheerful to her, but to her surprise after a long effort she succeeded in uttering only one word, "Tibbie!" That seemed to make Tibbie feel worse than ever; she looked as if she were going to burst into tears. She seized Meggy's hand, and asked a number of questions. It was too difficult. Meggy closed her eyes and went to sleep again.

The sun shone through the curtains of the bed. She was hungry. She was also astonishingly weak. She tried to roll over and the effort exhausted her. She must have been ill herself, not Tibbie. And where was she? She could see the window, and through it against blue sky the bare branch of a tree. If she moved her head ever so little a flaw in the glass made her see two branches, close together. A bar of sunlight spanned the room; little specks danced in it.

She heard light quick footsteps outside, and the door opened. Meggy saw a blue woollen gown with a chintz apron and a white kerchief. She saw the face that had been such a comfort to her. It was more than a pleasant face, it was a sweet face, the sweetest, she thought, that she had ever seen. It was not really young, but comely still, with sweet bright eyes, a little straight nose, and sensitive lips. Meggy felt her own face break into a smile. "Flory MacDonald," she murmured in utter contentment.

That was not right. It appeared a great want of respect in her to address the heroine by her first name. Yet how could one say "Mrs. MacDonald," just as if she were an ordinary woman? It was like calling the Bonny Prince Mr. Stuart, or the King Mr. Guelf, or . . .

"Poor child!" The light touch fell again on her forehead. "Poor child!" Someone else entered the room. "Tibbie, the fever is gone. I think she might have an egg this morning—very soft."

Tibbie brought the egg up and broke it into a cup. She put a little butter in it, and some salt and pepper, and fed it by spoonfuls to Meggy as if she had been a baby. It tasted delicious.

"Ye're feeling better?" said Tibbie, in a whisper, as if she were afraid to speak out loud for fear of hurting Meggy. "Ye're really feeling better?"

Meggy really was. She watched Tibbie straightening

things up. "Why do you do that?" she asked when she saw her carefully make a hole in the bottom of each half of the eggshell.

"Witches," said Tibbie solemnly, "can only cross running water in the unpunctured half of an eggshell. 'Tis no' canny tae be leaving such things around."

Witches. What strange things Tibbie thought of!

"That's running water I'm speaking o'," explained Tibbie; "they cross the sea in sieves."

She brought a basin of warm water to wash Meggy's face and hands, and made a rather splashy job of it. She and Meggy were both tired when she was finished.

"Mrs. Malcolm does this better than I do," said Tibbie, "but she is ower-busy this morning."

"Mrs. Malcolm?"

"Aye. The leddy that was here but a little while ago. Mr. Davit's mither."

"But she—I thought—then it wasn't Flory MacDonald at all!"

"Na, na. Flory MacDonald is awa' home at Killiegray. 'Tis a matter of twenty miles more tae Killiegray. Ye faintit awa' in Mrs. Rutherford's parlor, and Mrs. Malcolm juist happened tae be there wi' some ither leddies. She kenned ye were the young leddy Mr. Davit was aye talking aboot, and sae she brought ye hame and took care o' ye. 'Tis autumn fever ye've had, frae sleeping in the cribhouse, and riding in the rain. Ye mauna talk. Go back tae sleep again."

It was too much for Meggy to grasp. She slept, and when she woke the face was once more bending over her.

"Of course," said Meggy, looking into those brown eyes, "I should have known. Flory MacDonald has blue eyes."

Mrs. Malcolm laughed, and patted the bedclothes where Meggy's shoulder was. "Now that's better," she said cheerfully. "You're coming on nicely. Would you like to try sitting up with a pillow at your back?"

How *good* people were! And what a lot of trouble she must have been.

"I'm sorry——" began Meggy in a troubled tone.

Mrs. Malcolm cut her off. "Now you're not to worry," she said. "You've been no work at all. Your Tibbie has taken care of you, and she's been a real help to me too in my work. And it was the least we could do to bring you here. David has been blaming himself for starting you on such a long journey. 'Twas no trip for a girl who hasn't been accustomed to riding more than an hour or so at a time."

Mrs. Malcolm. David. The tall brown-faced lad who sent her the note. Of course. Of course! Meggy saw the light at last.

"And you're not to worry about Flora MacDonald," went on the lady, who seemed to love to talk. "We'll carry you to her as soon as you're well enough. Captain MacLeod was sorely distressed to leave you behind, but he had to get home to his Anne. He said you rode on so

quietly, without a word of complaint, that he had no idea you were so near done. Men are blind creatures."

Her voice rippled on so pleasantly that Meggy was sorry when she had to go away.

With increasing strength restlessness came. The hours dragged. She enjoyed the little gifts and messages that people sent. David found in a sunny spot in the meadow a little cluster of blue violets and picked them for her. Captain MacLeod, despatching a messenger to Cross Creek on business, bade him stop at the Malcolm house and inquire after Meggy. Mrs. Rutherford sent in a syllabub in a blue glass dish.

"When you've finished eating it," said Mrs. Malcolm, "I'll just take that dish down and wash it myself. Glass and china are right scarce in the back country—and Daphne can make dents in pewter."

Meggy scooped up the last trace with the pewter spoon and handed Mrs. Malcolm the dish as carefully as if she expected it to explode in her hands.

"I'd like fine to get up," she said. "I feel so good-for-nothing here. You must be busy. Isn't there something I could do to help?"

"Busy!" Mrs. Malcolm raised her hands. "I've got the loom all set up to weave a new suit of woollen for David and his dadda both, but what with the hog butchering and the sausage making to oversee, and the half-dozen Holland shirts cut out and ready to be sewn, and the pewter maker with his molds all over the kitchen

and Daphne getting slower every day, I haven't had time to touch the shuttle. I have enough for six women to do—and here I stand chattering with you! Get up, child, if you wish to, and come down and watch what is going on. 'Twill be more entertaining for you than lying here by yourself. And when you're strong again you can help a bit if it makes you happier."

Tibbie came to help her dress. By the time the operation was over, Meggy sat in the low chair utterly discouraged, tears of weakness streaming down her cheeks, wondering if she would ever feel like herself again.

"You just don't realize what a blessing health is until you lose it," she told Tibbie earnestly.

"Aye," agreed Tibbie. "Ye'd best wipe your e'en," she added anxiously, "for Mr. Davit is coming to carry ye downstairs." And Tibbie looked as if the losing of one's health might have compensations.

Meggy dabbed hastily at her wet cheek. When David knocked at the door she was smiling.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH MEGGY AND DAVID TALK

MEGGY sat at the loom. It was a big old thing, fashioned before she was born by the careful hands of some country craftsman out of persimmon wood, put together with wooden pegs and rubbed to a milky brown smoothness. The backless bench jutting out from the frame, upon which she sat, was a little high for Meggy; she had to slide down to reach the treadles with her toes. She worked rhythmically, pushing the treadles with her feet, sending the narrow shuttle with its freight of blue wool thread between the sheds or warp thread, pulling down the board that drove home the weft. The treadles clattered, the board banged, and Meggy sang while the blue cloth lengthened.

She had the house to herself. The December morning was mild as spring. Through the window, open to let the sunshine in, came faintly the toot of a fife, the mutter of a drum, more faintly the shrill whine of bagpipes. They were drilling, Robert Rowan and his company of militia on one side of the creek, the Loyalists on the other. David was there, marching with the Patriots, performing all his maneuvers with serious pre-

cision, his father beside him or before him, a little more mechanical, a little more grim.

"'His bonnet stood aye fu' round on his brow,'" sang Meggy, "'His auld ane look'd better than any ane's new.'"

Tibbie, who had proved to be surprisingly capable in the sturdier of the household arts, was in the back yard hanging over her kettles of boiling soap like a witch over a brew of toads and mice. Now and then as she gave directions to black Daphne her voice floated in to Meggy positively oily with importance. Mrs. Malcolm had gone to Mrs. Porterfield's, where the patriotic ladies congregated to make cartridges and melt down old lead and pewter for bullets.

"'An now he let's 't wear ony gait it will hing,
And casts himself down upon the corn bing.'"

Mrs. Malcolm was busy all day long, feeding her family, petting her "menfolks"—and how they adored her!—spinning, sewing, weaving, running to Mrs. Porterfield's to make cartridges, trotting with a basket of food and the precious baby clothes that had been David's to an emigrant family that had taken refuge in an unused shed. Her men, who towered above her like shepherd dogs over a kitten, teased her constantly and pretended to bully her, but how abashed they were when she sent them back to the doorway to wipe the

mud off their boots, how miserable when they came home and found her not there.

"'Oh! were we young as we ance had been . . .'"

As soon as she was strong enough Meggy had learned to weave. She could not thread the loom yet, but once the piece was set she could weave away as deftly and evenly as anyone. She was proud of her facility, and so glad to be able to do something to help. It eased the mortification she felt over having been ill and a trouble to strangers. She would have worked all day if they had allowed her to.

"'We would ha'e been gallopin' down on yon green . . .'"

She set herself a stint to do every day and watched with satisfaction the length of cloth roll up. It seemed tangible proof that she was, as they said, a help and not a burden.

"'And buskin' it ower the lily-white lea . . .'"

Through the window she saw the brown earth, littered still with brown leaves that rustled when the wind touched them, and the big old oak, with a mass of mistletoe, already in berry, held in its great arms like a nest. Along the wide street a Highlander came walking;

his kilts swung above his bare knees. Meggy recognized the MacDonald tartan. She had been two months in the back country and she had not seen Flora MacDonald yet. Everyone knew her; everyone spoke of her with affection and respect. And more, she knew of Meggy and of her illness, and had sent word that she would be welcome at Killiegray whenever she could come. Her own daughter Fanny had been ill with fever, too, and folk reported that not even the preaching at Barbaque Kirk had brought her out.

Meggy herself, still feeling the effects of fever, was in no hurry to leave Cross Creek. She and Tibbie were needed in the busy household, and she was happy there. She enjoyed, too, the crowds and bustle of the young and energetic little town. It was strange, she thought, how many friendships had come to her along the way to Flora MacDonald: Miss Camerson and the lads, Alice and Pherebee, Ewan—poor Ewan, how was he faring now?—and now the Malcolms. Not to forget Tibbie, who looked on her, David said, with eyes of idolatry

"'And werena my heart licht I wad dee.'"

Near her left shoulder some shelves held the family books. She tried to read the titles. *The Compleat Housewife. Smith's Moral Sentiments.* Johnson's *Dictionary. Token for Mourners.* Not very entertaining reading. A shaft of sunlight gilded *The Woman-hater* in two vol-

umes, spilled over onto Bates's *Dispensary*. Ah, here, *Clarissa Harlowe*. She had begun it in Edinburgh.

"I'll finish that," warbled Meggy to the tune of "Werena my heart licht," "when I get time."

Her thread broke. She was bending over it when the latch clacked and someone came in.

"Where's Mother?" said David—always the first question.

"At Mrs. Porterfield's. She went some time ago. She ought to be back soon."

He stood his gun in the corner. "Oh, well, you're here."

She raised her eyes from the knot she was tying and looked at him to see if he had anything of special import to tell.

"It's a pretty day," he said idly, resting his elbow on the mantel and kicking the slumbering log till it sprayed sparks.

He wore leather breeches and the long brown hunting shirt of the back countryman belted in around his slim hips. Lean and tall and brown—his mother was so proud of him! His slender fingers toyed with his father's long churchwarden pipe.

"How was drill?" said Meggy.

"So-so. Look here, Meggy, have you been at the loom ever since I left? Well, you're workin' altogether too hard for us. You'll have to stop now. Orders from headquarters."

Absurd to feel so pleased, Meggy told herself severely, because a tall brown lad chose to issue commands in a masterful tone of voice that should by rights rouse any lass of spirit to resistance. She bent her head over the wool again and said:

"As soon as I've tied this thread. Tell me about the drill."

He sat down in the wing chair by the fireplace and stretched his long legs out before him.

"We're ragged. Some of the men had had too much grog, and others of them were unwillin' to take orders—though they can all shout, 'Give me liberty or give me death!' The Tories drill better, Meggy. They've a number of regulars among them. Trainin' tells." He was silent a moment or two, and then laughed suddenly, a boyish cackle. "You know Mr. Campbell—him that they call in Gaelic Far-Earst? You'd never think, seein' him in his store potterin' around and peerin' with his short-sighted eyes at the sarsenet and nankeen and pattens and thingummies, that he harbored a militant spirit, would you? 'Tis a sight to see him drill! He marches as if the King himself were watching him, and there's a glare of holy rage in his eye. I'd hate to meet that man in battle with a claymore in his hand."

Meggy remembered the little man in his dim shop on Broad Street. There was no fanatic gleam in his eye when she had seen him selling a penny-worth of barley sugar to two dirty-faced urchins. She put down her

thread and rested her elbows on the frame of the loom.

"The feeling between Whigs and Tories is far more bitter in Wilmington than it is here," she said thoughtfully. "For all the proclamations and the drilling, I can scarce believe when I am here that it will come to a fight. I cannot see you and Far-Earst Campbell, for instance, shooting at one another."

"Far-Earst will not be seeing me—or anybody else. Everything will go red before his eye, and he'll slash with his claymore till the battle's over, or till he gets shot," replied David. "It's said they have but a handful of fowling pieces for all their army. They are to fight with swords—in this day! General Donald MacDonald was at Bunker Hill. He must know there's not much a man with a broadsword can go against an enemy that kneels behind stumps and shoots. Oh, well, we'll see. Haven't you finished yet?"

Meggy put her shuttle aside and patted her roll of cloth with housewifely pride. "There is almost enough now for your father's guard cloak."

"Let guard cloaks be and come out for a ride. This weather will not last. A short ride wouldn't tire you, would it?"

"A ride! In the morning!" Meggy pretended to be scandalized. "You should go down to the grist mill as your dadda asked you to and see if that good-for-nothing Jameboy is malingering again, and I——"

"I'll go later. It is hard to work these days. I feel as if

everyone was waitin' for somethin' to happen. We drill and they drill, and we all come back and go about our business together, and on Sundays go to church, but all the time we're watchin' each other and waitin' for someone to shoot off a gun or let out a battle cry. It isn't war, and it isn't peace."

Meggy went upstairs to don the green riding joseph. These were strange times, she thought. David was fortunate, and Far-Earst was fortunate too, for they knew on which side they stood, they were ready with undivided hearts to fight for it. But Meggy—the sight of Scotsmen in their kilts marching to the skirl of the pipes made her sad; the Patriots in hunting shirt and spatterdashes made her restless and uneasy. She was torn between two loyalties: loyalty to the old, the traditions, distant and stirring, of which her father used to talk; loyalty to the new friends who had opened their homes and their hearts to her. Sometimes when she lay awake at night thinking about it it seemed as though both sides were waiting for her to decide. As though when Meggy MacIntosh knew where she stood the drums would roll and the pipes skirl and the armies march against each other. *Oyez! Oyez!* Meggy MacIntosh has come down off the fence! The war can begin!

David was waiting for her with Roderick and his own powerful bay, which he kept groomed and curried till he shone. "He's a Narragansett pacer," he had told Meggy more than once.

It was pleasant to be in the saddle again. The sun shone down; the two horses moved off together. "Watch out for the tree!" cried David. They ducked under a branch of the oak and went on into the road. Meggy liked the slow *klip-klop* of the horses' hooves, Roderick's rhythmic movement beneath her.

"Which way?" she said. "Creek or woods?"

"Let's go up the hill yonder. I feel like climbing on somethin' high and lookin' out."

All the world—all the backwoods world—came to Cross Creek. Around the Market Square their wagons stood; in the yard of Lee DeKeyser's inn was a line of saddle horses and sulkies. At James Hogg's store and at his house Loyalist gentlemen congregated. The barber shop, where James Arantz dispensed periwigs, pomatum, and soap and dressed your hair or your face according to what he fondly believed was the latest mode, was a center for Whig gossip. Every mill had its quota of men who came on business and stayed to discuss the times and utter with an air of spontaneity the prophecies they had tried out on their wives the night before. The shoemaker, the wheelwright, the blacksmith all had their theories and their audiences. Gaelic was heard as often as English; even the Negro servants could answer their masters in the Erse tongue.

"It would be better," commented Meggy, "if the masters had learned English."

"The Highland leaders," David observed dryly, "are

doing their recruiting in the Gaelic. Let's turn here."

To the north and west of the town the ground rose. Meggy and David took a trail through the pines that led them presently to a clearing on the hillside where someone had built a cabin and a barn. Smoke curled up from the cabin chimney; a bearskin and a fox's pelt were nailed outspread to the side of the barn; in the little cornpatch the stalks marched in rows, each one stripped of its leaves, topped with its brown-wrapped ears like a heavy pennant on a staff. Below through the trees was the town with its massed roofs, the winding creeks, the Cape Fear looping itself between the swampy flats of scrub trees and tangled vines that bordered it. The sun gleamed on the water, warmed the distant forest to color—dark green where the pines grew, russet and dim purple in the swamps.

"Yonder's our house," said David, pointing to a glimpse of gray stone among the trees in the foreground. He turned and swung his arm around to the right. "Dadda has a plantation out there, six hundred and forty acres on Beaver Creek, with a house and offices and peach and apple orchards. 'Tis beautiful in the spring. I'm to have it all when I come of age."

"And shall you live there and be a planter?"

"I'd only be a back-country planter, Meggy, with a handful of slaves instead of scores, and a few hundred acres instead of thousands. But I'd like it. My mother was raised on the lower Cape Fear where the plantations

—well, you know. You've seen it. I like to hear her tell about it. At Christmas they have such times. 'Tis too Scotch here to be very gay at Christmas."

Meggy remembered Edinburgh. "New Year's Day is the great day in Scotland," she said. "Currant bun and shortbread and whisky for everyone. I used to be miserable. I could not go out, for by noon the streets were full of roisterers, and the house was still and gloomy. My uncle and aunt Keith and Veronica would all be away at some festivity, and I would be alone. Even the servants would be off merrymaking."

David turned to look at her, his horse wheeling with him. "I cannot imagine you lonely. Folks always want you with them."

"Nobody wanted me in Edinburgh," said Meggy simply. "I tried to keep out of people's way. I think," she said, "I am sorriest in the world for anybody who is lonely. Tell me about Christmas on the plantations."

"To begin with, there is always a big company of guests. They come with their servants and stay all through the holidays. In the daytime the men go out huntin' deer and the ladies talk and gossip and tell each other everythin' the men whispered in their ears in the moonlight. And at night the young folks dance and the old play whist. And all the time there is wine and sangaree and turkeys and hams and ducks and syllabubs and trifles and cakes and candied yams and jellies and

preserves and every good thing you can think of. On Christmas Day"—the horses were tired of standing and they started down through the woods—"the slaves come up from their quarters for gifts, and then they sing. Did you ever hear 'Ho rang du rango'? It's got a grand swing. Mother used to sing it.

"'Christmas comes but once a year,
Ho rang du rango!
Let everybody have a share,'"

—he nodded for Meggy to join in—

"'Ho rang du rango!'"

"It must be very gay," said Meggy.

"You might have spent this Christmas on a plantation yourself," said David, "if you hadn't been so eager to go to Flora MacDonald." He stopped short. The same thought had occurred to both. Two months in Cross Creek—and not so much as a glimpse of the object of her long trip. "Meggy, do you still wish to go to Flora MacDonald?"

There was but one answer. She had already made the Malcolms an overlong visit; Flora MacDonald had sent word to her that a welcome awaited her at Killiegray. "Yes, I must go as soon as I have an opportunity," she said. "I have tarried overlong already."

"I have been remiss about helping you to get away. I can't seem to remember," said David, looking troubled, "that you are in the other camp. I must often say things that make you angry."

"But I'm not in the other camp, David. At least, I don't think I am." They came to a brook rippling through the pines, and stopped to let the horses drink. While she stood there, bending forward with her rein hand outstretched to give the horse full play, Meggy tried to make clear her position. "All my life Flora MacDonald has been my heroine, and it was because she was in America that I ran away to come myself. Deep in my heart I've always thought—and I still think—that the side of the colonies is the side of freedom. And now I find Flora MacDonald organizing the Highland Scotch—my own people, David! Some of them fought beside my father at Culloden—against the colonies, and it churns me all up and makes me feel puzzled and uncertain. I do still want to see her and talk to her. The Highlanders are so brave and loyal, and it's hard to believe them wrong."

"They aren't wrong exactly," said David, going on again. "But they don't see that it's time to choose between the old and new. They are in America, but they close their eyes to it and try to pretend this bit of backwoods is Scotland. Well, it isn't. Huzza, here's some holly. We'll take home a bit to Mother." He broke off a branch from a tree laden with stiff glossy leaves and

clusters of scarlet berries. "It's all very well to be so loyal," he said, speaking more warmly than he perhaps knew, "but they might remember that they've cause to be loyal to the colonies, too. Many of them came without money or goods or anything, and our planters and merchants helped them and set them on their feet. Their loyalty seems to me sometimes a coin with ingratitude on the other face of it."

Meggy winced. The metaphor went home, and stung. This was her first ride. She was tired, and over-sensitive; and furthermore, she reminded herself stoutly, she knew David's kind heart well enough to know that he meant nothing personal. Yet, "If the shoe fits," Miss Cameron had been wont to say crisply, "put it on." She fell silent, wondering if the coin of her loyalty was stamped with ingratitude on its other side. Accepting the hospitality of Patriots, being cared for and nursed by them—and yearning for Flora MacDonald, unable to make up her mind on which side of the fence to jump down.

"Don't think," said David, "that I mean anything against Flora MacDonald. She's done as much for her own people as any Whig has, and she's a wonderful woman whichever side she's on. She and Mother think a great deal of each other, for all they don't see eye to eye. I'll find a way to carry you to her."

They had taken the long way home. Both were sorry for it now. At least Meggy was, and she was sure that David was, too. He no longer lingered, but rode steadily

on as if he could not get home too soon. The silence grew intolerable.

"'Christmas comes but once a year,'"

she sang,

"'Ho rang du rango,
Let everybody have a share,'"

—David came in on the last—

"'Ho rang du rango.'"

It sounded very jolly, but Meggy's heart was heavy, and David looked somber.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH MEGGY GOES TO A BALL

MEGGY was dressing for a ball. Her hair was her chief concern. She had spent the night and the greater part of the day with her head covered with curl papers, set, according to the directions in that valuable treatise, *Plocacosmos, or The Whole Art of Hair-dressing*, which Mr. Arantz had lent her, "like regular rows of trees with their heads bending to the crown as if blown thence by a gust of wind from the face." Furthermore, each of these prostrate trees had been carefully pinched by Tibbie with hot irons, while the rest of the family, fearing a conflagration, stood about and offered advice.

"If you're goin' to have a high head, Meggy," said David, "the correct thing to stuff it with is a red cow's tail. Oh, 'twill tickle and prickle a bit, but what's the odds if you're fashionable!"

His own entire preparations for the festivity in prospect consisted of the greasing of his boots, so that he could afford to jest.

"I notice that when the papers come off," said Mrs. Malcolm, who was holding the book, "the scene changes from land to water. 'A lady's hair,' it says, 'should carry

with it the idea of your standing on the beach and viewing the sea as far as your eye will carry you, till by a gentle swell it falls from your sight.'"

"Well, now that there's no more danger of a forest fire," said Mr. Malcolm, "I'll betake myself to the solace of my big chair and 'that bewitching vegetable, tobacco,' and leave you to prepare for your Tory ball in peace."

"You'd better come with us," said David, tucking his boots under his arm and preparing to follow.

"No, no, my son. There will be enough of pipes and battle cries and blind Highland enthusiasm to make you fair ill."

The curl papers came down, and Meggy's hair, after a bad moment or two, went up. "Oh," said Tibbie reverently, "it looks bonny. It looks bonny!" Meggy held the candle high and craned and nodded at herself in the looking glass. "I think myself," she said with some complacence, "it looks mighty fine!"

She could not wear her sea-green lutestring, for it was too cold. With the new year had come bitter winter weather. The ground was frozen hard; there was ice on the panes of glass in the morning; beyond the radius of the fire the room was bleak. But she had a fresh white kerchief for her gray homespun gown, and she took immense satisfaction in her scarlet thread stockings.

She was ready far too early. She laid her cloak and woollen mittens aside—the old cloak of Veronica's with

the scarlet lining—and sat down before the fire to compose herself. To-night she was going to meet Flora MacDonald, and if she had been waiting to be presented to the Bonny Prince himself she could not have felt more elated—or more nervous.

A series of balls was being given throughout the back country as a means of rousing the Highlanders; at each one Flora MacDonald appeared, danced a bit, and spoke to the people in Gaelic. The ball to-night was to be held at Windfield, Murdoch MacQueen's place near Longstreet. David had kept his promise to find a way for Meggy to meet her heroine; he and his mother, for all their Whig principles, were escorting her to the Tory dancing party.

The moon was up when they started, crowded, the three of them, in the chaise. Meggy sat between David and his mother, a little bit forward, looking to right and left of her in ecstasy over the beauty of the winter night. The shingled roofs of houses looked as if they were covered with snow; the ground was silver; the feathery pines overhead were black against the luminous sky. The horse's hooves clicked on the frozen road; the wheels grated and now and then squeaked; a rabbit hopped across the road in front of them, his tail a white button in the moonlight.

Meggy's nose was cold and her breath came in white puffs like steam. Mrs. Malcolm wore a fur tippet around her neck; her hands were deep in a little round muff,

which she held up to shield her face when the wind blew. Every once in awhile David leaned over to pull the bearskin rug closer around them.

They had been driving for perhaps half an hour when they heard someone following on the road behind them. The rhythmic hoof beats drew nearer until David, leaning out of the side of the chaise, could tell who was in the other carriage.

"It's Sally MacEver and her brother," he reported. "She's pretty as a picture," he added to Meggy, "but mean——!" He whistled. From something in his quickened tone Meggy gathered that the meanness of Sally was no detriment in his eyes. He leaned out again to call:

"Ho, Mistress Sally, can I lend you a horse?"

Mrs. Malcolm stirred a little; Meggy was sure she shared the acute discomfort that women feel when their men try—without marked success—to be funny. Meggy felt besides another pain which she preferred not to analyze. As the road widened out the MacEver chaise came abreast of them at a brisk trot. David touched up his horse, and for a moment they raced neck and neck. Gradually the other carriage pulled ahead. Sally's vivacious little face, white in the moonlight, looked back at them, and her derisive laughter tinkled on the frosty air.

"Mighty pretty," said David, chuckling, "but mean as anything."

Meggy thought that if Sally were going to be there the ball was as good as spoiled for her already, until she remembered that she was going, not to dance with David, but to see Flora MacDonald. She fell to thinking of her heroine. She wondered if she would be disappointed in her. Could the flesh-and-blood person, no longer young, really measure up to the image which her dreams had created?

There were other people on the road now, all going in the same direction. A farm wagon, drawn by mules, carried a whole family; they sat upon straw in the bottom of it, and called out a greeting as the Malcolms passed them. A man came along on horseback with his wife on the pillion behind him. A lad galloped by on a spotted pony.

They turned into a white sandy lane that wound among the pines. They forded a little creek, and felt its breath damp and chilly on their cheeks, and they passed a cornfield still dotted with black stumps before they reached the long low house built of logs where glowing windows, the hum of voices, and discordant notes of fiddles being tuned told them that there was merriment afoot. David left his mother and Meggy at the house and went on to put up his horse in the shed.

Someone opened the door and they went in. The big room had been cleared for dancing; the wide boards of the floor were scrubbed white; benches and stools were pushed back against the rough walls. At one end a big

fireplace was filled with crackling fat pine knots; their flare provided all the light that there was—a reddish glow that made people's faces look ruddy and cast black shadows in lines and masses.

Beside the fire the fiddlers, three or four of them, were tuning up. As nine out of ten Highlanders are passable performers on the violin, there was never any lack of musicians for the balls. A cluster of men stood in a corner, sober-looking men in brown or blue kilts and dark coats, with white shirts and neatly clubbed hair. In another corner the women talked together, a quiet little group in homespuns. Meggy scanned their keen, tired faces in search of Flora MacDonald, and decided that she could not have arrived. A few shy lads stood against the wall, smiling spasmodically when they fancied someone caught their eye, looking afterward as if they wished they hadn't. Except for one or two fresh-faced lassies smiling encouragingly at the lads, and Sally MacEver, dimpling and looking mean in the center of a little circle of men and boys, the score or so of people there seemed solemn and subdued.

"Heigho," whispered Mrs. Malcolm, "these Scotch take their pleasures seriously. Come, let us put our wraps in the other room."

In a smaller room wraps had been strewn on bed and chests. A baby, cradled in a basket made of splits, slept in a corner.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Malcolm, leaning over

to touch the round cheek with one finger. "He had to come to the ball with his mammy."

Meggy put up her hand to her frizzed hair uneasily; she was glad now that she had not worn the lutestring; her gray wool gown and scarlet hose sounded exactly the right note, she thought, of restrained festivity.

In the other room a man's voice shouted something in Gaelic; it was echoed by a score of voices, and the fiddles burst into the lively and familiar strains of "Merrily Dance the Quaker's Wife." Meggy was carried back to childhood days in the Highlands when the dancing master would come and the grieve get out his fiddle and everybody—servants and family and all—take lessons in the Highland fling to the tune of "Merrily Dance the Quaker's Wife." She felt the blood glow in her cheeks, and her toes tingled with the rhythm. She hurried out.

Sally MacEver was attempting to persuade one of the shyest of the youths to dance a fling for her; around the two of them were grouped the rest of the younger fry. At the other end of the room, however, the older folk stood in a circle to watch the performance of one who was, Meggy recognized, an artist in the heel-and-toe and the single and double fling. He danced gravely, and unsmiling the rest watched him, themselves connoisseurs.

A commotion at the door made everybody turn. There was an instant discord, occasioned by the attempt of one fiddler to play "Hail to the Chief" while

the other two went stolidly on with the "Quaker's Wife." Flora MacDonald had come in.

She was immediately surrounded; everyone wanted to touch her hand and get a word or a smile from her. Meggy was content just to look. She need not have feared disappointment. Small and slender and erect, with the grace of a young girl, she was a great lady, was Flora MacDonald. She had the gentleness of the great lady who is simple still at heart, the composure of one who has lived and felt, and, in the poise of her dark head, in her deep blue eyes and her ever-changing expression, the fire and spirit that were her own. Meggy's heart beat fast; that imaginative worship which a young girl sometimes feels for an older woman welled up within her. Flory MacDonald, oh, Flory MacDonald!

"And why no. go say a worrd tae her?" questioned a quiet voice beside her.

She turned to find Captain MacLeod looking down at her with that half-amused expression in his rather small blue eyes that made her feel a trifle ridiculous. She went across the room with him, one cold hand upon his woollen sleeve. And then she was looking straight into Flora MacDonald's eyes, which seemed brimming with life and kindness, and felt her hand clasped tightly in two slender warm ones.

"So this is Meggy MacIntosh at last!" said Flora MacDonald. "Why, you're scarce bigger than our

Fanny! And you've traveled all the way by yoursel' to see me—run away from Edinburgh and your aunt Keith and come upon troublous times in the colonies. Weel, you're my lassie now. Come, let me mak' you acquentit with the others."

Allen MacDonald—called by his title, Kingsburgh, from the name of his estate in Skye—was tall and fine-looking, a quiet, landed gentleman; Anne, who had married Captain MacLeod less than a year ago, had a fragile beauty, touching in its perfection; Fanny was a vivid, ardent child in a white callimanco frock and a blue sash; Sandy, the eldest lad, looked like his father; Jamie, amazingly enough in that handsome family, was freckle-faced and wiry; and there were more, they said, at home. "Ranald and Charlie and Neil and wee Flora," Fanny enumerated.

"I've come a long distance," said Meggy shyly, "for this."

"Puir lass—and been weary and ill into the bargain. Why, Mary Malcolm! I declare 'tis an ower-long time since I've seen you! And your tall lad, too. So you bearded the Tory in his den to bring my little pilgrim to me! If you can spare her to me I'll take her home wi' me the nicht. Oh, dinna fash yoursel's about her things—we can fit her out. Is't time to begin the dancing? Come away into a corner wi' me after a bit and we'll have a crack! Meggy, here's a lad is wishing you for a partner."

Meggy turned to find tall Sandy MacDonald bowing to her. She made him her best courtesy and took the arm he proffered. Her mind flew back to the old Highland minister who had been her tutor in Edinburgh. "If Mr. MacPherson could see me now!" she thought.

The ball was to open with a formal contra-dance; the fiddlers had already started to play a discreet and dignified air. Couples formed into lines down the room, Kingsburgh and his lady at the head, Meggy and Sandy somewhere near the middle. David stood up with his mother—not, Meggy was relieved to see, with pretty Sally, who had chosen one from the circle around her. Bright-eyed little Fanny, with a massive, bearded old Highlander, took the foot of the line. There were not nearly enough ladies to go around; the extra men crowded together beside the door.

Meggy was nervous. The contra-dance was a complicated affair with many figures; she was afraid of doing the wrong thing and throwing the line into confusion. She resolved to keep her eyes on the lady next to her, a thin little woman with snapping eyes and red, work-worn fingers, and to do whatever she did. The fiddlers gave the signal and the dance began.

Meggy was concentrating too fiercely upon the steps to notice anything else. Once in the grand chain she clasped Captain MacLeod's big cool hand; once she courtesied to David and he grinned at her; once Flora MacDonald with a smile reached out a hand and

steered her to the right instead of the left; at more or less regular intervals she found herself again opposite Sandy MacDonald, who smiled and nodded reassuringly. Nevertheless she was glad when it was over, and glad that the next was to be a reel.

David captured her for his partner, though no fewer than three other men wanted her.

"So you're goin' home with Flora MacDonald!" he said. His eyes added, "to the other camp!"

"So she says. Is she no' a wonderful person, David?" Her eyes were on Flora MacDonald, taking her place in the first set opposite Far-Earst Campbell, saying something to him in Gaelic at which they all laughed. She was such a gentle, such a modest person, yet her presence was felt all through the room; everybody turned to watch her with a brightening of the eyes that was just for her. Meggy's heart beat faster as she reminded herself that she was really to go home with her to Killiegray.

"Meggy——" said David. But when she lingeringly turned to him he muttered, "Never mind."

Since there were not enough ladies to go around some of the men took the part of the missing damsels. Archibald Ray, the master of the Longstreet School, led out a great tall gowk of a lad who minced and courtesied with a gravity that made him all the more ludicrous. The reel was a fast one. Meggy was breathless—and so was everyone else—when at length, after a perfect

frenzy of squeaks and much lashing of elbows, the fiddlers achieved a series of final chords and the dance was over.

Someone brought out big jugs of persimmon beer and cider. Not more than a few cups had been poured, however, when the fiddlers looked at one another, raised their bows, and broke into "Leather Breeches." It was a martial air; unconsciously heads were held higher and shoulders straightened. There was a silence. The lad who was pouring out the cider let the jug hang unnoticed in his hand. Everyone looked expectant.

Then Flora MacDonald spoke. She scarcely seemed to raise her voice, but every syllable carried, vibrant and ringing, to the corners of the room. The Gaelic words went home to the hearts of her audience. Meggy watched the faces about her, the faces of gnarled Highlanders, veterans of another and disastrous war, of weather-beaten farmers in the kilts of their fathers, of awkward lads, and the fine, strong, work-weary faces of the women. They all listened intently. Sometimes a gleam would come in their eyes, as if some chord had been touched. Meggy felt the heightening of emotion throughout the entire company, felt the tide of enthusiasm rising.

Flora MacDonald raised her right arm. "*Clanna na' Gael*," her voice rang out. "Sons of the Gael, shoulders together!"

A wild Gaelic shout answered her. Meggy was stirred

to her very marrow. The stories that her father had told her of love and hate, of war and ancient battles, and of Scotland's glory came rushing back to her now; her breath came in quick jerks. Sons of the Gael, shoulders together!

Fanny MacDonald touched her elbow. "We have to go now," she whispered. "Mother wishes to get home early."

Meggy threaded her way among the little knots of men. Most of the women had congregated in the room where the cloaks were; some looked exalted, others spent. The mother of the tiny baby held him in her arms, moving gently to and fro to still his cries.

Mrs. Malcolm drew Meggy aside. "You're going on to Killiegray, my dear. We'll miss you. I'll have your things in readiness and we'll see if we can find a way to get them to you—and Tibbie, of course, and your horse."

It was hard to realize that she was leaving Cross Creek and the Malcolms. It had happened so quickly.

"Tibbie can help you, I know," she said. "You keep her and make her useful and—I'll be coming into Cross Creek sometime soon. Maybe David would keep Roderick exercised for me." It was almost like making a will. She gulped and tried to find words for the gratitude and affection which she felt.

"Now, Meggy," said Mrs. Malcolm, "if you wish to come back to us for any reason, the latchstring is al-

ways out to you." She smiled and patted Meggy's hand. "You'd better run on; they're waiting on you."

The MacDonald cavalcade was forming, assisted by the crowd of Highlanders.

"I'm going to send Fanny home in the chaise with Annie and Alexander," said Flora MacDonald, "and you can ride pillion behind me, Meggy. Allen and the lads have their horses. Now let me see, you'll need a safeguard. Fanny—that's it. Yes, did somebody call me?"

She handed Meggy the heavy woollen riding petticoat and darted back into the house. The MacLeod chaise, with Fanny riding bodkin between her sister and brother-in-law, started off. David drew Meggy aside.

"I reckon I know how you're feelin'," he said. "It's somethin' like a crusade—except that they don't know what the Grail is, nor where it is." The frosty moonlight fell on his face, glimmered on the silver buttons on his tight blue coat. "It sounds mighty fine—traditions and oaths of allegiance and the glory of Scotland—but it looks like the other side was more real, somehow."

Flora MacDonald came back again, Kingsburgh at her side. Someone brought up her horse, a beautiful white creature arching his neck and prancing a little, shining in the moonlight like a charger on an old tapestry. Meggy gave David her hand hastily in farewell. Flora MacDonald was already mounted; Kingsburgh

swung Meggy up onto the pillion and fastened the safeguard around her skirts. Meggy clutched the little metal handle of the pillion and settled herself on the padded leather cushion as the horse wheeled. Kingsburgh was on his big hunter, the lads on their somewhat antiquated nags. People pressed around to say good-bye. Meggy waved over their heads to Mrs. Malcolm in the lighted doorway. David still stood beside the horse. He reached up his hand and touched Meggy's foot to attract her attention.

"Meggy, if Dadda and I should both be away and Mother needs you, you'll go to her?"

"I will, David. Oh, I truly will!"

They were off through the pines and the loneliness. Four horses' hooves plopped on the sandy road; the wind swelled in the trees overhead; the moonlight was silver on the ground; an owl flying above cast his moving shadow before him. Strangest of all the strange things that had happened in the last twelve months—to be riding through the pines with Flora MacDonald, watching the moonlit road ahead over her shoulder, feeling now and then the tickle of her fur tippet as the wind blew it back. She was awed. She wanted to say something, but nothing came into her mind that seemed good enough. Should she speak of the Prince, or of the scene to-night?

"I was just thinking," said Flora MacDonald, "that Neil will have kicked every one of his covers off!"

CHAPTER XVII

KILLIEGRAY

"YOU'VE got what you wanted, Meggy MacIntosh," said Meggy sternly to herself. "Now be happy!"

The pines stood miles deep around Killiegray. There was no sound but that of the wind in their tops and the light drip of rain. Even the stream called Mountain Creek slipped between the tree trunks as silently as the file of Indians that had passed that way a few days before. Meggy stood by the window and looked out at the dripping gray day and the wet trees.

The house behind her was quiet. Flora MacDonald had ridden away on the white horse to see a Highland family; the older lads were busy about the farm; Fanny and Wee Flora had gone to see Anne. They had politely asked Meggy to go with them, but that would have meant getting out the chaise and she saw they were in a hurry. She said that she wanted to read, but she left her book and went to the window to watch them jog off, both on the same tall gray horse.

There was nothing for Meggy to do. The five indentured white servants did everything that there was

to be done about the house. They were not like Negro servants, laughing and chattering among themselves; they had been trained to work silently, to make no sound when they walked. They made her feel as she used to feel at her aunt Keith's in Edinburgh, unnecessary, unwanted, lonely.

"A year ago, on a day like this," she thought, "I would have put on my things and gone to see Mr. MacPherson to talk about Flora MacDonald. And now I'm here—in her very house—living here."

She saw her every day, heard her sing her Gaelic songs, sat with her children in a circle about her to listen to her stories of old times. She had seen the sheet on which Prince Charlie had slept—"I'll be happed in it when I'm buried," said Flora MacDonald—had touched the silver service which generous London had given to its pretty young Scottish prisoner. The red damask curtains, the shelves of books, the white and lavender teacups, the satin coverlets on the beds, which gave to the big ill-built mansion its semblance of luxury, had been brought, painfully, from the house in Skye where the Bonny Prince had slept, where Flora for nearly twenty-five years had lived. Oh, undoubtedly Meggy had reached her goal; in less than a year, over the ocean and through the forest, she had reached the haven that she had dreamed about since her childhood. But she had to tell herself to be happy.

They were so kind to her, so cordial, this big family

that was like a club, so careful to explain their family jokes to her and to include her in their activities, but they did not need her. They did not need her.

"I can walk in the pines as well as ever I could on the Edinburgh streets," Meggy told herself, and remembered how she used to long for the woods and freedom. "I have everything I wanted. My heart should be fair bursting with joy!"

She wrapped herself in Veronica's old cloak and pulled the scarlet-lined hood over her head. The rain in her face was soft and fresh; the dripping pines were fragrant. She tilted her head back so that the drops might patter down her cheeks. She turned her back on the stark gray house mounted solidly on little stone piers and walked down the needle-strewn wagon track toward the road.

How far she had come in the last year, and how many people she had left behind her: Veronica, Ewan, Alice and Pherebee, dear, salty Miss Cameron, the Malcolms and David—tall, lean David, brown-haired, brown-eyed, smiling, drawling, understanding. She had left them all, and she had come here to Killiegray, shut in by miles of pines. She was not needed here, but she could not go back.

There was no one whom she could talk to. Captain MacLeod, whose keen blue eyes searched out all one's secrets, would have known how she felt, but he was gone. He and Kingsburgh and Sandy had all gone off

to join the King's Standard at Cross Creek. They had ridden away early one morning.

"God keep you," Flora MacDonald had said, and to Sandy, "Mind you look out for wet feet. Your throat's no' strong yet."

They had mounted their horses. Wee Flora had rushed out for a last kiss; Sandy had waved his bonnet to Fanny, his especial pet; then they had galloped down the long driveway, followed by the lads, who ran and shouted until they were out-distanced. Meggy and Fanny and Flora MacDonald, with the maids in the background, had stood on the portico watching.

"There are troublous times ahead," Flora MacDonald had said, putting her hand on Meggy's shoulder. "God will keep the right. I pray a' our own are in the right."

Then there was the war; it troubled Meggy. Troops, ammunition, guns, swords, proclamations, medicine chests, supply wagons, battle cries, royal standards—she was swept along on the flood of it. The MacDonalds acted as if the war were their private family enterprise—and so in a way it was: a Highland chief leading his clans to battle—and they took Meggy's loyalty as much for granted as their own. She herself was less certain of it. How was one to know which side was in the right?

She had reached the road, a wet, rutted ribbon through the pines, and there she perched on a pile of logs to watch the world go by. The Highland army was

gathering and it seemed to Meggy that a great part of it must have passed by Killiegray. Every day they came, on foot and on horseback, trudging along by twos and threes or marching by companies to the skirl of the pipes. Those who came by twos and threes would stop and talk.

"I fought at Culloden," said one hard-bitten, grim old man, "and I'm going to be on the winning side this time."

To-day for a long time nobody came. Meggy contemplated the wet expanse of the meadow across the road where it sloped down to the creek; yesterday a company had camped there for the night, and all evening the whine of the bagpipes had curled up through the trees like mist. The charred remains of the camp fires were still there. It was growing dark and Meggy's pile of logs was very damp. She slid to her feet and started to go back to the house.

At the sound of squeaking wagon wheels and men's voices she paused, and presently five men plodded into sight, with a rough cart drawn by a tired-looking mule. Two of the men wore brown kilts; the other three, buckskin breeches and hunting shirts. They all carried rifles. They were talking together in Gaelic and when they saw the meadow they stopped and seemed to be deciding to spend the night there. One of them spoke to Meggy.

She shook her head. "I have not the Gaelic."

"We wish to camp here," the man translated. "Is there a house near by where we can get feed for our mule?"

Meggy knew the policy of the MacDonalds. She pointed toward the wheel tracks that led to the house. "Yonder is Killiegray. Flora MacDonald will see that you have what you need."

At that moment Flora MacDonald herself rode up. She looked pale and weary in the wet twilight, but her voice was as vibrant with warmth and courage as ever. She spoke to the men in Gaelic, and when she finished the five dour, tired, middle-aged Scots farmers waved their bonnets over their heads and cheered her wildly.

She dismounted, and leading the white horse, walked along beside Meggy.

"There's five good men," she said, "tae make up for the wagonload of deserters I met to-day. Some o' them had been tell't—and I wonder who was the leein' body that tell't them sic a thing—that Sir Henry Clinton was encamped wi' his regulars on the ither side o' the Cape Fear at Cross Creek. When they found that it was a five-day march to Brunswick and Sir Henry they were a' for hame. An' there were ithers who turned their backs because the new Scotch, they that landed in the fall, are getting commissions on equal terms wi' those that ha'e been here a year—or two—or twelve

'Upstairts,' they called them, and they cam' awa', leavin' the upstairts tae do the fightin'. Weel, Meggy, the day of the march-out will tell us how many leal Highlanders there are in these sand hills, but I dinna like tae see the deserters."

The big house loomed out of the rain before them. Candlelight gleamed from its windows, and the warm acrid smell of wood smoke came through the wet. Flora MacDonald paused.

"It's a bonny place," she said softly. "When I first saw it, 'twas springtime, and the sun fell on it and the woods were white wi' dogwood. 'Allen lad,' I said to Kingsburgh, 'we'll spend the rest o' our days here in happiness and peace.' Little I thocht we'd be rousing the clans to battle before the year was out."

Flory MacDonald, oh, Flory MacDonald! Meggy forgot that she had been lonely and troubled all day.

But early the next week Flora MacDonald began to make preparations for riding into Cross Creek for the march-out, and it was decided that Meggy would stay at Killiegray with the "bairns." She dreaded the long quiet of the days without Flora MacDonald, dreaded to hear that the march had started and that the fighting had begun; her mind was full of a gray stone house on the Cool Spring Lane. Had David gone to fight, and did he ever think of her?

"I hate war," she said to Fanny.

"Oh, don't you, though!" agreed Fanny vehemently.

"Even though we win, Father or Sandy or Alexander may be hurt or killed. It never seems to enter anybody's head that we might fail, but we might!"

Fail? Three thousand Highlanders, with their claymores and dirks, their gold sovereigns, their medicine chests, their trained leaders? And an army of British regulars waiting for them at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. How could they fail? Yet David had said that there was not much an army with broadswords could do against an enemy that knelt behind stumps and shot. (Where was David now?)

"What would you do if the Highlanders fail?"

Fanny rose and went to the window. "We'd go back to Scotland," she said flatly. She was silent for a moment before she burst out, "I love Killiegray!"

Back to Scotland!

"There's someone riding up the drive!" exclaimed Fanny. "A woman. It isn't Anne's horse. Look, Meggy, what a beauty!"

Meggy ran to the window. It was almost dark, but she could see the horse and its rider. There was something familiar about that horse, something more than familiar about the lanky figure astride him. Tibbie? *Tibbie.*

"Tibbie!" She was out in the drive when Tibbie reined in. Roderick recognized her voice and turned his long head toward her, nuzzling her shoulder with his velvet nose. "However did you get here?"

Tibbie slid wearily off the saddle. "I came wi' an auld mon frae Inverachty who was gaein' back to his farm in Mecklenburg County. I would ha'e been here two hours syne, but I lost my way at the crossroads." She stood and beamed at Meggy. "Ye look a bit peaked," she said, "but it's yoursel'."

The arrival of a stranger always brought a crowd to the door. The lads clustered admiringly around Roderick; Wee Flora stared at Tibbie; Fanny had gone for her mother; the servants peered in from the doorway. The candles were lighted and Tibbie was brought into the parlor. Flora MacDonald thought to ask her if she had had anything to eat, and then proceeded to ply her with food and questions together.

"Ye've come from Cross Creek?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you seen Colonel MacDonald there, or my son Sandy? Were they in good health? Did Sandy get his commission? Did many come to the Standard?"

Tibbie stood stiff and awkward in the center of the room, and fixed her eyes on Meggy as she gave Flora MacDonald slow and careful answers to her questions.

"Colonel MacDonald was there, ma'am, chiefly in company wi' General Donald MacDonald. I've heard folks call Mr. Sandy MacDonald 'Leftenant.' The baith o' them looked to be in guid health. There is a host o' Scotsmen in Cross Creek now; ilka day more seems tae come to the Royal Standard till ye wad think

a' Scotland itsel' had moved into the back country. They're campin' a' around the toon, waitin' for the day of the march-out."

There was something more. Tibbie had not ridden all the way from Cross Creek to bring this news.

"What of the Malcolms?" said Meggy.

"Mr. Davit is sent as messenger to Wilmington tae bear a warning to the Committee o' Safety there. His dadda is in guid health, but yesterday at sundown Mrs. Malcolm slipped on the milkroom floor and hurt her back. It pains her so that she canna sleep. Mr. Malcolm is wi' her now, and ane o' the neighbors, but Mr. Rowan's company of militia may march at any moment and Mr. Malcolm wad ha'e to go. I tell't him I'd come awa' for you."

Mrs. Malcolm suffering and alone, with only that feckless black Daphne to wait on her! Husband and neighbors Meggy counted as nothing. Any moment Mr. Malcolm might have to go, and the neighbors had their own families to look after. It was Meggy's opportunity to pay back a little of the debt she owed—and she had promised David that she would go if she was needed. With a strange little feeling of relief mingled with her distress, she turned to Flora MacDonald.

"I must go to her right away—to-morrow morning!" she said breathlessly.

"But, Meggy"—it was Ranald's voice raised in protest—"you don't want to go among Whigs, do you?"

"I promised David Malcolm I'd return if his mother ever needed me."

Flora MacDonald was looking at her keenly.

"We're a' bound by our promises," she said gently. "If ye must go, Meggy lass, we'll bid ye godspeed and help ye on your way. We're a' fond o' ye here, and we'll miss ye, but I'm sensible that we dinna need ye as sorely as Mary Malcolm needs ye, and I think perhaps ye dinna need us as ye need her."

Flory MacDonald. Meggy looked at her through wet eyes. She was a great lady, an ideal for any lass. Who should say if her cause were right or wrong? Meggy only knew that though she was glad to be going back to Cross Creek, her eyes were wet with tears for Flory MacDonald.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DAY OF THE MARCH-OUT

MRS. MALCOLM was in bed; no bones were broken, but she had wrenched her back badly in her fall and was suffering a good deal. She was delighted to see Meggy.

"Davy was sure you would come!" she said. "Oh, my dear, you will find the house all to pieces. I tell Daphne what to do and she looks at me solemnly and says, 'Yassum, ah sho' will,' with the greatest earnestness, but I know 'tis all gone out of her kinky head before she leaves the room!"

"I'll put everything to rights," said Meggy comfortingly. "And I'll begin with you. Would you like to have your hair combed and your face washed and your bed straightened?"

"I should like it above all things. Davy brought me a basin of water this morning for my face, dear lad, but I could not raise my arms to do my hair. Oh, Meggy, they are gone! Davy returned from Wilmington yesterday afternoon, after Tibbie had gone for you, and this morning he and his dadda marched away with Mr.

Rowan's militia. They were to join Colonel Moore somewhere along the Cape Fear to prevent MacDonald from getting through to Wilmington. They were loath to leave me alone, but Davy said he was sure you would come. They've gone, Meggy, my two boys, and I shan't have an easy moment till they are safe home again. I would not keep them here, but oh, my heart was heavy to see them go!"

So David had marched away in his buckskin breeches and his hunting shirt with his Joe Manton rifle over his shoulder, tall, lean, brown David with his long easy stride. To silence the thoughts that were knocking at her brain Meggy threw herself into the job of putting to rights the disorganized household.

She sighed over the living room: dust on the loom, mud on the floor; the hearth full of ashes, the woodbasket empty; the candles burned down to stumps, and no more to be found. She groaned over the kitchen, where Daphne, unsupervised, had allowed grease and dirt to take their course. She fairly wept over the milk room. The milk pans had not been washed; no churning had been done; the stone floor needed scrubbing. Having surveyed the field, she lined up her three, Tibbie, Daphne, and Toney, and issued her orders. Then, stopping every few minutes to make sure they were being carried out to her mind, she got out the molds and wicks and set about the problem of more candles.

She was immensely busy and important; she glowed

with zeal. Now and then she heard snatches of music or the beat of a drum, and all day men and wagons seemed to be passing by on the road before the house, but otherwise she was scarcely conscious that the Highland army was gathering within the town. That night she went to bed with an aching back and a mind full of plans for the next day. "I'm a bit like my aunt Keith," she thought as she drifted off to sleep. "I'm a managing kind of body, and I need to have something to do to be happy."

The house was strangely empty without David. Meggy, less busy the second day, missed him more. Mrs. Malcolm, lying by herself with nothing to occupy her but a little sewing and her thoughts, lured Meggy in to tell her stories of David when he was small. She had a lock of his baby hair still, pale and curly, and his embroidered cambric christening robe. Touching gently the precious relics, they forgot that the curly-headed baby had grown up and gone away to fight.

A bugle call roused them, a call to arms. A door slammed across the street. Footsteps sounded along the road.

"The march-out!" gasped Meggy, remembering. "Oh, I must see it!"

She caught up her cloak, stopped at the milk room to summon Tibbie. They hurled themselves out of the front door and across the yard. The latch of the gate eluded Tibbie's trembling fingers.

"Hurry, Tibbie, hurry!"

They ran. Others were running too, women with shawls thrown hastily around them, small children, stumbling, and white-eyed darkies. A crowd already fringed the plain on the edge of town where the Highlanders were accustomed to drill. Meggy and Tibbie, breathless, found an opening and wedged themselves into it.

There before them, spread out on the plain in the winter sunshine, was the whole Highland army: thirty or forty companies standing at attention in all the Highland panoply of feathered bonnets, claymores, tartans. Some wore the buckskin breeches of the back countryman, some the clansman's kilts and bare knees.

At one side of the field, in the center, stood General MacDonald and his staff, all on horseback. Meggy could make out Kingsburgh's tall frame, his big blue bonnet with the bunch of black ribbons on it, and Captain MacLeod's tall horse. In the center of the little group was Flora MacDonald. The sun shone on her white horse; the MacDonald plaid was over her slim shoulder; she sat erect and still, as if waiting.

The band marched the length of the field. The pipers were the proudest men Meggy had ever seen. They produced shrill music that hurt one's ears and made one's soul tingle with fervor. The drummer's back made a semi-circular line from his head to his heels, as if to brace the great drum upon the front of him. His sticks

flashed in the air; he crossed his hands and tapped the drum on the left side with the right stick, on the right side with the left stick; he tossed them into the air and caught them again without missing a beat; he twirled them. They came to a halt at last near the general.

Flora MacDonald after an instant's pause rode forward a few steps and stopped. Even those in the watching crowd felt the tense hush of the moment as the slender figure on her white horse faced the army that she had done so much to raise.

She spoke to the troops in Gaelic. The stillness was so complete that it seemed as if no one were breathing; there was no sound but a cardinal whistling in the trees and her clear ringing voice. The wind that stirred the folds of her tartan brought her words to Meggy now louder, now so faintly that she had to strain her ears to hear them.

"What is she saying?" she whispered to Tibbie.

"She's calling to mind the brave deeds of Scotsmen in days gone be and the luve they've a'ways had for their land, and the promise they made to be leal. Eh, sirs, she's a bonny leddy!"

When she finished there was uproar. The men were waving their bonnets and shouting in wild enthusiasm. The air rang with Gaelic oaths of loyalty. The piper stepped forward and spoke to Flora; she answered in a flash; the band broke into "Leather Breeches." A command was shouted, and the companies were in motion,

wheeling, turning, marching. The general and his staff rode forward. People on the edge scattered to open up a pathway to the street. The march-out had begun.

Down the wide highway they went, an advance guard first, followed by the drum and the skirling pipes, and, after a little pause, Flora MacDonald and General Donald MacDonald, riding side by side. Behind them came the other officers of the staff, and then the clans in the order of their strength: the MacDonalds, the MacLeans, the MacKays, the MacLachlans, and a dozen others.

The crowd of spectators moved along beside them. Meggy and Tibbie, well in the van, kept Flora MacDonald in sight. The pipes were in their ears, the rattle of the drum, the hoof beats of the horses, the rhythm of two thousand marching feet upon the hard dirt road. Some of the crowd dropped out; other people joined it; here and there down the line a woman walked beside her husband or her sweetheart. "God bless ye!" called a thin old voice from a doorway. A wee lad perched on a gatepost shouted something in Gaelic. As they passed De Keyser's Inn a jeering group on the porch howled, "Look out, Sandy! The militia'll ketch you!"

Meggy had a stitch in her side. They were almost out of town. Was Flora MacDonald going to ride away to battle with her troops? Near the Cool Spring the little Highland lady drew aside from the line and took her stand under a big oak tree whose leafless branches made

thin shadows across her white horse. Meggy came as close to her as she could.

As each company reached the oak the command "Eyes left" was given. To each clan as it passed by Flora MacDonld called out its Gaelic battle cry. And each clan answered with a Gaelic shout that "fairly [Tibbie said] tore the heart out o' ye."

Still they came on. The march-out! The day of triumph for the Loyalist forces. The sound of the pipes was lost in the pines; there was nothing now but the steady tramp of feet, the occasional wild bursts from the clansmen. Meggy watched the men. She saw a tall thin fellow, his elbows rigidly back, his feet raised high, with a fervor that was both absurd and touching in every movement; she saw a well-knit lad, with honest blue eyes and a short upper lip, swinging along as if he enjoyed it, a gray-bearded man settling into the effortless stride of an old campaigner. File after file marched steadily by with set faces, their cheeks shaking a little in time to their steady tread, only their eyes revealing the ardor that was sweeping them on.

They had passed. A lad—he could not have been more than fifteen—in a kilt of dark blue and green with a thin line of yellow in it brought up the rear, cheering shrilly when Flora MacDonald recognized him as the sole representative of his clan and shouted to him, "A Gordon! A Gordon!" Behind him came the wagons with supplies and tents, and behind them a raggle-taggle

yelling and barking following of small boys, Negroes, and dogs.

The Highland army was gone.

As one who has known a great exaltation and the emptiness of spirit that it leaves behind, Flora MacDonald turned away. Most of the crowd had already drifted by twos and threes back to their homes and their work, but a few stood at a distance watching to see what she would do; a few others crowded close around her to touch her dress, to exchange a word with her, to get from her perhaps some of her confidence of right and victory in order that their hearts might be easier about their own. Meggy heard a woman invite her to sleep that night at her house, and heard her answer that she had promised to return to the MacKays' at Longstreet. Malcolm MacKay came up to her on his pony, and they started to ride off. Meggy, with Tibbie close beside her, waited at the mouth of the lane. Flora MacDonald saw her as she had hoped, and stopped.

"Meggy! Ye saw them go? A' my bonny lads. And the pipes and the drum and the shouting! 'Tis a great day for the back country. Did ye note how they marched, Meggy? They'll charge as they march, all together wi' their whole souls in it, and a shout for 'King George and broadswords!'" She slipped off her horse and handed the reins to Malcolm MacKay. "Take him aff and water him and gi'e him a wee taste of oats, and come

back for me at Mrs. Malcolm's house. I'll just walk up the back lane wi' ye, Meggy, and have a crack wi' Mary Malcolm. Is she much in pain?"

Meggy was not quite certain that Mrs. Malcolm would be eager to see Flora MacDonald. Since the departure of David and Mr. Malcolm there had been a note of bitterness in her voice when she spoke of the Highland leaders. Though Meggy said nothing about her doubts, Flora MacDonald guessed what was in her mind.

"If she's blaming me for a' the trouble we're in, it's no more than natural," she said tolerantly. "I think she'll see me, though, for Mary Malcolm and I ha'e been good friends together, and we've both to play the woman's part now—of waiting."

Meggy left her downstairs in the easy chair by the fire and ran up to prepare Mrs. Malcolm for her guest.

"So they've gone! I heard them go, with their pipes and their yelling. There's a blessed silence in the town now, but I felt better when they were here. I'll not have an easy moment, dreading every second to hear that there's been a battle, and Mr. Malcolm and Davy in it. Was that someone downstairs with you, Meggy?"

"It was Flora MacDonald. She's on her way back to Longstreet, but she stopped in to chat with you. Do you feel like seeing her?"

Mrs. Malcolm hesitated. "Give me another pillow. I think I can sit up a bit more. And a fresh nightcap—

in the bottom drawer of the chest there. She's a good woman, Flora MacDonald, and she comes in all kindness. It's a great pity that anyone with such a gift for drawing people to her should be so mistaken."

They met with but little constraint after all. They kept at first to safe topics, to Mrs. Malcolm's back and the comfort that Meggy was to her.

"You haven't come to take her away from me? I don't know how I could get along without her."

"No, no. She's a dear lass, and I'd be gey glad to have her back again"—wtih a smile for Meggy—"but you need her more than I do."

There was silence in the room. A log snapped twice and Meggy rose to crush out the spark with her heel. Daphne in the kitchen below sang mournfully, "Oh, come home, come home, come home, my fader's children."

"They've gone now!" exclaimed Flora MacDonald, as if she could no longer bottle up the thoughts that were filling her. "It's your lads against my lads now, Mary, while you and I wait—and fear."

Mrs. Malcolm's lips met in a thin line. "You've brought it on yourself," she said, "and on many another wife and mother. If you had been content to sit at home and not go stirring up your people with your Highland charms—I mean that in the sense of incantations, though the other meaning is true enough—they would have stayed neutral in the conflict and a deal

of suffering would have been spared us all. But with your Gaelic and your battle cries and your tales of old heroism you've worked a flighty set of folks into a frenzy!"

Flora MacDonald for the first time since Meggy had known her looked as old as she was. Her face was drawn and lined, her eyes tired, her hand trembled a little.

"God grant I haven't led my people astray," she said. "Their leaders have done them harm enough in the past. But ye're wrong, Mary Malcolm. I never made the war. The conflict was coming anyhow, and regardless of what the Highlanders did, your own lads would ha'e been in it. And ye must remember," she added with a sigh, "I've more lads to lose than you. Allen and Sandy are gone now, and Charlie and Jamie and Ranald will be following close on their heels."

"You are right. The conflict was coming, and the first battle will not settle it one way or the other. There will be fighting in all the provinces before it is done. I would not keep my men at home, nor would you hold yours, but 'tis a weary road for us women folks!"

Malcolm MacKay came with Flora MacDonald's horse. It was time for them to be going, he said, if they were to reach Longstreet before nightfall. Meggy had Toney saddle Roderick and she rode with them to the top of the hill. There they paused for a moment and looked back from almost the same place where she and

David had stood one day in the fall looking down over the little town and the river beyond.

"I'll leave you here, Meggy." Flora MacDonald rode close and put her hand on Meggy's shoulder. The tired look had gone; once again she was all spirit and her eyes were shining. "Never ye forget that ye're a Highland lass wi' a Highland heritage. Come, Malcolm."

Meggy watched them until they disappeared among the pines. The last thing she saw of them was a splash of sunshine on the flank of Flora MacDonald's white horse.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH EWAN COMES TO CROSS CREEK

AT FIRST it seemed as if a battle were to be fought right on Cross Creek's very doorstep, so to speak. Colonel James Moore with his men—and they included Robert Rowan's company from Cross Creek—were encamped upon the Rockfish Creek a few miles below the town. General MacDonald and the Highlanders paraded opposite them, and for a short time notes passed back and forth, and rumors of battle filled Cross Creek. The story was brought back by deserters from MacDonald's army and by lads who walked the seven miles through the woods to peer at the armies on the creek and who reported the tramp of sentries and the glow of camp fires and little else.

Two companies of Colton's Corps of Regulators from Mecklenburg County deserted the Loyalists in a body. ("*They're* not Highlanders," said Meggy proudly to Mrs. Malcolm.) Their progress through Cross Creek was interrupted at a dozen points by little anxious groups from houses and shops who stopped them to learn the news. Toney, the Malcolms' yard boy, ran

away and followed them all through the town; when he sneaked back and fell to work with ostentatious industry, he was not punished but brought into the house to tell what he had heard.

"It was dis-away. Gen'ul MacDonald he made a great speech. He tol' um he had nuffin' but sco'n fo' de cravens dat didn' want to fight, and he said, 'If any ob you hyah is too faint-hearted'—da's what he said —'to suhve wid yo' min' made up to conquer or die, you'd bettuh speak up now.' An' ev'body up and gave a huzza fo' de King, 'ceptin' dese hyah two companies of Regulators, an' dey lit out fo' home."

And then suddenly MacDonald was gone, without a battle. He decamped at midnight and at dawn he was miles away marching toward the bridge over the South River, with Moore and his men panting at his heels. People of Campbellton could tell—and did—how he had crossed the Cape Fear at midnight and sunk his boats behind him.

There was bitter argument in Cross Creek as to what this move meant. Some said he was afraid to fight; others shook their heads and declared that he had outgeneraled Moore and was maneuvering to choose his own ground for an engagement. Meggy was sure from the talk she had heard at Killiegray that he had no intention of fighting until he reached the coast and Sir Henry Clinton.

They waited for further news. The slow hours brought

nothing but rumors of the marching of troops. Colonel Caswell was coming from New Berne with eight hundred minute men, Lillington and Ashe from the east, Moore and his men—and David and Mr. Malcolm—were close behind MacDonald. From all directions the Patriots were gathering, marching, marching through the pines.

It was increasingly hard to work. Meggy rubbed Mrs. Malcolm's back and carried her meals to her, and they talked in low voices.

"No fighting yet?"

"Not yet—that we have heard of."

"Of course an army must fight—but I dread it so."

The three days seemed like three years. On the one day when the roads into Cross Creek were open, after Moore and his men had left the Rockfish and before Thackston and Martin came to occupy the town in order to cut off MacDonald's retreat, Ewan MacNeill came riding through.

Tibbie saw him first. She was scouring pewter in the kitchen while Meggy under Daphne's tutelage learned to make spoon bread.

"That horse yonder looks like Whitey!" said Tibbie.

Meggy went to the window, her wooden spoon still in her hand. A white horse, thin and weary, came plodding along the dirt road under the big bare oaks; on his back was a slender figure in mud-splashed black, a drooping figure yet somehow a jaunty one.

"It *is* Whitey!" cried Meggy. "It's Whitey—and Ewan!"

She caught up the front of her skirt and made a dash for the door, knocking over a three-legged stool in transit.

"Ewan!" she cried, running across the lawn brandishing the wooden spoon. "Ewan!"

The figure turned, straightened up suddenly, and with a cry dismounted.

"Meggy! I was looking for a way to come on the road to Longstreet without taking the main street. Mistress Pherebee told me she had seen your friend David last week who told her that you were at Killiegray—but no matter now. Dod, Meggy, cornmeal on your nose and wooden spoon and all, you are a sight for sore eyes—and mine are well-nigh crossed with weariness."

His boots were splashed with red mud, his black broadcloth dusty and stained, his face white as a sheet and lined with fatigue, he had lost his hat; but he was the same Ewan—slim, golden-haired, incurably elegant, a wee bit cocky.

"Ewan! Are you sure you're real? I can scarce believe my eyes. What brings you to the back country? When did you leave Wilmington? Have you seen any fighting?"

"I've been riding all day and all night. Your Whitey is not a bad beast, if you spur him relentlessly. He was

fat and spoiled." He looked toward the house. "May I suggest it might be well to go in? I've spent the last thirty hours dodging military gentry in and out of swamps, and I'm not over-eager to meet them now."

Meggy recovered from her surprise and stupefaction sufficiently to call Toney and tell him to take care of Mr. MacNeill's horse. Bestowing the wooden spoon on Tibbie, she led Ewan into the house. She saw his glance sweep the room, taking in the loom, the bookshelves, the plaited rugs, the hearth with its fire gleaming on brass firedogs, the pewter plates upon a shelf. He leaned against the mantelpiece as though he could no longer stand alone and looked down at her.

"Dod, Meggy, now that I'm here I'm too dazed to talk to you! Are you a wee bit glad to see me?"

Poor lad, he was so tired! Meggy knew how he felt. Had she not ridden herself from Wilmington to Cross Creek?

"I *am* glad to see you, Ewan, truly glad. Though I'm still dumb with surprise. And I'm bursting to hear what brings you to the back country. But I'm not going to talk or let you talk until you get a bit rested. Come on upstairs, Ewan, and lie down."

David's room was in readiness, swept and cleaned, blue and white coverlet woven in the pine-tree pattern upon the bed, freshly laundered curtains at the windows.

Ewan sighed. "'Tis mighty tempting, Meggy. I'll

be no good to anyone till I get some sleep. I'd no idea what heavy work it is to ride all night. Dod, I just kept on the road by main strength and awkwardness." He hesitated. "I'd better know whose hospitality it is I'm enjoying. There are no Whigs about? I've small wish to encounter any. No"—he met the question in her eyes—"I'm no spy—I signed their wretched association—but I've a horse and a good pistol and a money belt that I should prefer not to be relieved of—and I cannot afford to be delayed, either."

"Never fear. 'Tis Mr. Malcolm's house, but he and David are both with Robert Rowan's company on the march to Wilmington, and I am staying with Mrs. Malcolm, who is ill. She is a dear lady. She will be glad to have you rest in her house and she wouldn't think" —Meggy chuckled—"of relieving you of your pistol. Come along up, Ewan. You look tired to death."

He seemed puzzled. "I've not overmuch time to stay. I had thought you would be at Killiegray with Flora MacDonald. Have you gone over to the Whigs altogether, Meggy?"

It was Meggy's turn to hesitate. Was she Loyalist—or Patriot? She had left Killiegray thankful to be needed in Cross Creek, but had she turned her back forever upon her own people? How explain to Ewan the tumult still in her mind, the misery of divided loyalties?

"I scarcely know, Ewan. Mrs. Malcolm took care

of me when I was ill, and I have come back to be with her now when she needs me. I was at Killiegray until ten days ago. I'll tell you all about it when you have rested."

After she had left him in David's room and sent up Tibbie with a pitcher of hot water and a glass of milk and hot biscuits, she slipped into Mrs. Malcolm's room to tell her about his coming.

"Did he say anything of my brother's family, or about the armies?"

"Only that Pherebee had seen David and he had told her I was at Killiegray. Oh, yes, and he said he had spent the last thirty hours dodging military gentry in and out of swamps. He was too weary to speak, but I'll ask him when he awakes. I've no idea what brings him here, but I've his word that he's not a spy. He may stay in this house?"

"Yes, child, by all means. If a lad rides a hundred miles to see you, we must make him welcome. Meggy, this pillow has slipped—just a little—that's better."

Two hours later Meggy knocked at Ewan's door. Hearing no answer, she opened it and peeped in. He had pulled off his boots and hung his coat over a chair before he had thrown himself flat on his back across the bed. He lay there, arms outspread, legs trailing over the edge of the bed, sound asleep. His lashes were black on his pale cheeks, his lips parted like a child's. He was a handsome lad; there was race in his clean-cut features, the nervous sensitiveness of the thoroughbred,

the thoroughbred's long slender lines. Things must be going better with him, Meggy thought, for in spite of his exhaustion he had the assured, satisfied look which he used to wear. She spread a blanket lightly over him, picked up his coat and his muddy boots, and tiptoed out.

"Yes'm, Miss Meggy," promised Toney, "I sho' will bresh um an' shine um *good*. Law*dee*, des look at 'at coat. 'At sho' a good coat. Yes'm."

Meggy had a shrewd idea that as soon as she turned her back Toney would succumb to the temptation to try on that coat and strut about in it. "Brush it, not wear it," she commanded, and smiled as he rolled his eyes at her, the whites all round expressing outraged innocence.

Whatever had brought Ewan on this long journey into the back country? Did he bear some message for a Loyalist leader? But the Loyalist army was away from Cross Creek now—and besides, he had spoken of looking for her.

He slept through the dinner hour into the afternoon. By half-past three Meggy was beginning to feel impatient. She had put on her scarlet thread hose and a white gauze apron, and she was ready to hear the news of Wilmington and of Ewan.

It was one of those days in late February when winter is slumbering and spring has tiptoed in to look about. Little early daffodils were blooming in the sheltered bed beside the porch; long sprays of winter honey-

suckle shook out their sugar-and-water fragrance on the air; against the fence a hedge of winter jessamine was yellow. Meggy sat down on the lowest step in the sunshine. Two little sparrows with brown and white heads hopped and *chipped* on the wet ground near by. Spring in the Carolinas again! Meggy had been here almost a year.

"'I'll ower the muir to Meggie,'" sang the teasing, slightly condescending voice she had not heard for so long,

> "'Her wit and sweetness call me,
> And to the fair I'll tell my mind
> Whatever may befall me.'"

Meggy looked up quickly. This was not the sort of "Meggy" song Ewan had used to sing to her. He had come quietly out through the door and was standing on the porch behind her. Rested and brushed, he was himself again. Meggy offered him a seat on the step beside her, but he refused it, saying as he took the top step instead:

"I'd rather look down on you. It gives me a feeling of superiority—false, of course, but I feel the need of it at this moment."

Superiority had never been a commodity in which Ewan was lacking. Meggy, with her accustomed candor, told him so.

"Well, no matter," she said, as he was a moment silent.

"Tell me why you are here, and what of Wilmington? And did you hear anything of a battle on your way?"

"There are troops everywhere. There are skirmishings, of course, and a deal of noise, but no fighting yet so far as I know."

"Did you see anything of Colonel Moore's company?"

"I think not. I came up the Brunswick road and I fancy they were on the other side of the river. Must we talk of nothing but the armies?"

"It seems the back country thinks of nothing else, on one side or the other. Tell me of yourself, Ewan. Have you been well—and prospering?"

"I have been well—and in the future I am to prosper. 'Tis that I have come to tell you of, that and something else. Dod, Meggy, you look demure as a Quaker in that gray gown, and yet I make no doubt you'd set out for the mountains to-morrow—or for Edinburgh—if the notion struck you. It beats all how a lass can look so mild and quiet and be so adventuresome!"

Meggy stuck out her foot and revealed a slim scarlet ankle. "My gown may be gray, Ewan, but my hose are red!"

"I think I told you once you'd never be a beauty, but I vow you've turned almost pretty. In the sunshine there your hair is golden, and your skin always was milk-white."

Praise from Ewan—qualified though it might be—

was a novel experience. Meggy smiled broadly. "And my scoopy nose?" she suggested.

"Your nose suits you. 'Tis unexpected and independent—and aspiring. Laugh if you like; I am serious. Meggy, you haven't told me why you are here instead of being safe at Killiegray. You're not promised to this young Whig, Malcolm, are you?"

"Promised—to David? No. I told you, but you were too sleepy to understand. You see . . ." She launched into the story of the last four months, from the start of her trip to the day of the march-out. Before she had finished she could see that his attention was wandering.

"I was afraid," he said, "that you wouldn't be willing to leave Flora MacDonald."

His words rested, unexplained, in the little silence that followed.

"Tell me about Wilmington—and Miss Cameron and the lads and Alice and Pherebee. Have they forgiven me for running away as I did?"

"Alice has not, I fear. She is daft on the subject of the Rebellion and has taken to going about giving white feathers to those that have not joined her militia. She will not speak to me now. Pherebee is a sweet little maid; she talks with me when she can, and she's long since forgiven you for going—though not, she says, for failing to tell her about it and let her help you. She sent her love to you."

"And Miss Cameron?"

"I have not seen her. She stays quiet at Holly Quarter. Willie is still at school with Mr. Tate; Alexander is with his aunt. Wilmington has been dreadful, Meggy. Feeling runs high between the Whigs and the Tories, and the Whigs are in the saddle. Every day there has been a new rumor about the Highland army. Some people would have it that hordes of wild Gaelic clansmen were waiting for the word to sweep over the lower Cape Fear and wipe out the city and all the plantations around it. Dod, I wish they had! Fear makes short tempers. There's been too much talk about tarring and feathering to suit my taste."

Sitting at ease upon the step, with one elbow resting on the step above it, his knees crossed, one newly polished boot gently swaying—he had the gift of sprawling elegantly, had Ewan!—he looked at Meggy with a new expression in his half-closed eyes. Why had he come?

"Ewan, what brought you here?"

With a quick nervous movement he sprang to his feet.

"I could tell you better indoors than sitting here on the steps like two schoolboys. Besides, it's turning cold and you are shivering."

They went into the house, where the coals on the hearth needed only to be poked up, and where friendly shadows gathered in the corners.

"Meggy, Kenneth is dead. He fell ill of a cold one Saturday, and the next Thursday he was gone."

Kenneth. Meggy tried to remember. Who was Kenneth?

"My elder brother. Probably you did not see him often. He was a dour strong fellow, with a powerful mind, bent on achieving fame some day as a lord justice-clerk. I never thought he'd go before me." He paused.

"I'm sorry, Ewan. It must be hard to have your brother die when you're so far away." Had they been close to each other, those two? Meggy could not remember that she had ever heard Ewan mention Kenneth.

"I was fond of him, for all we were so different. He was a fine man, and I'm sorry he's gone. You believe that, Meggy—that I'm truly sorry, though it's going to make such a difference in my life? My father has sent for me to go home and take my place as eldest son."

The MacNeills were certainly not people of vast wealth, but their eldest son would have means and leisure.

"Why, now," cried Meggy, "you can go back and marry Veronica! Oh, *Ewan!* Aunt Keith will be mild as a lamb now that you are no longer a younger son! Listen, let me tell you about Veronica. She thinks she could love a masterful man. Be masterful with her, till you get her, and then let her do as she pleases. If she hasn't already married someone else," her voice trailed off.

Ewan shook his head. "I've come a long way since

I left Edinburgh," he said. "It isn't Miss Veronica Keith I'm wishing to marry now."

"Who then? Not Pherebee Clayton?"

He came nearer to her, and took her hand in both his own. They were hot and dry. Meggy, suddenly realizing what was coming, tried in a panic to pull hers away.

"Oh, Meggy, Meggy!" he said. "Why do you suppose I have come so far to see you? I never knew till you went away from Wilmington how much I depended on you. You're so quiet, I scarce knew you were there until you'd gone, and then there was a hole nothing else could fill. I want to take you back to Auld Reekie with me."

There had been a time when these words of Ewan's would have opened for Meggy the gateway into paradise, but she too had come a long way since she left Edinburgh. Go back to Auld Reekie? With a sudden sharp vision she knew what this new country meant to her.

"I cannot leave America, Ewan," she answered slowly, explaining to herself as well as to him this new conviction of hers. "I should be homesick for it all my life. I love this land. I have friends here and I —I've found myself here, too. I was nothing in Edinburgh but a miserable little poor relation. Now I'm needed and useful—and happy. I could never go back."

"But what will you do here? You've left Flora MacDonald. You've no resources but a jewel—if

you've even got that left. Anyhow, what good is a big emerald to you in the backwoods?"

"I'll stay with Mrs. Malcolm while she needs me, and I shan't worry about what comes after."

"You'll marry some country bumpkin who owns a cabin and a few acres, and try to scratch a living out of the soil—and pour out all your wit and your courage and your sweetness on the struggle. The old ballad described you, Meggy. You haven't any idea what you're doing. There's a war beginning, and you don't even know where you stand. Yet you've come away from your strongest protectors, the MacDonalds, and allied yourself with a family of Whigs."

"I do know where I stand." It was all so clear now. Meggy MacIntosh had come down off the fence at last. "I stand with the Patriots. The Highlanders are my people, and they're brave and my heart is sore for them, but they are fighting for a memory and a worn-out, unjust oath. Their battle cry is 'King George and broadswords.' The Patriots are fighting for freedom and their homes, and *their* battle cry is 'Liberty or death.' They may be defeated at first, but they'll come back and fight again. I—" it was good to know it at last!—"I'm a Patriot, too."

"You don't know what war is. It's a dirty, messy business, unless you buy a commission in a crack regiment and go into it as an officer and a gentleman. But here, where the province is divided against itself, it's

Whig against Tory, and neighbor against neighbor. Whichever side wins the first engagement, there will be fighting for months, raids, attacks, reprisals, till there is suffering and poverty everywhere. And in the end—you know what happened after Culloden. I can't leave you to that. Come back to Edinburgh with me, Meggy. We'll have a house in the New Town and a carriage and you can chaperon your cousin to the balls!'"

"I think I am a backwoods lass, Ewan. I'd never make a fashionable Edinburgh wife for you. Leave me here and go back and marry someone rich and beautiful."

It was dusk in the room now and she could not see his face. When he spoke again his voice was flat; the assurance had gone out of it.

"That is your final word? You won't do it?"

"I'm sorry, Ewan."

She lit a candle. In its yellow light his face wore the strained smile of a small boy who is trying to hide his hurt feelings. He gathered himself together, and said in the lightly rueful tone of one who wishes you to forget that he has spoken more seriously than is his wont.

"I should never have imagined I'd wish to marry Veronica's little cousin—'mild, meek mansuet Merg'rit.' And still less would I have imagined that she'd refuse to have me. You're always giving me surprises, Meggy."

"'And werena my heart licht I wad dee,'" hummed Meggy thoughtfully. She felt older than he and im-

mensely maternal. "You're a braw laddie, Ewan, and a brave one. You've been far kinder to me than I ever deserved. But you're not ready to marry anybody. Go back to Edinburgh and have your fling. Some day when you're least expecting it some strong-willed lady will reach out and marry *you* and you'll live happy ever after. And you won't know it, but there'll be a homely little body in the back settlements of North Carolina will be wishing you well with all her heart."

The speech, which had been begun lightly enough, ended with a warmth of feeling that surprised them both.

"I know you will, Meggy," answered Ewan. "But I wish you would come with me."

That night after he left, Meggy knelt on the floor beside her window, looking out on the moonlit yard below. Her heart was full. She was sad when she thought of Ewan, who had ridden so far to see her and whom she would probably never see again, but she was at peace in her own mind as she had not been for many months.

The air was mild and a little damp; the slow swelling of the wind in the pines came faintly to her ears. She thought of the Patriot militias hurrying together from New Berne and from Wilmington, from Salisbury, from Cross Creek. Had they met the Highland army yet? And how—oh, how had they fared?

CHAPTER XX

NEWS FROM WIDOW MOORE'S CREEK BRIDGE

THROUGH all of Tuesday Cross Creek was uneasy with rumors of battle. A man returning from a visit to his son in Duplin County reported that cannon shots had been heard that morning somewhere in the region of Widow Moore's Creek. Speculation ran fever high in the town. The Highlanders had only a few fowling pieces and no artillery at all. Could they stand the raking fire of the big guns?

That evening a despatch rider galloped into town with news of the battle. Meggy was sitting in the twilight with Mrs. Malcolm, holding her hand. They had talked of the cannon shots and the probability of a fight, and now they were silent in the dark. Meggy scarcely knew what she was thinking of. Little pictures wandered irrelevantly through her mind: David as she had first seen him on the street in Wilmington in his buckskin breeches and tight blue coat, whistling to a redbird; the gray river on that dawn when she and Captain MacLeod had taken the ferry together; Flora MacDonald in the reddish glow of the pine knots talking

to her people at the ball; the last kilted company vanishing around the bend in the road; Ewan sitting on the step above her.

The tumult that broke out in the innyard three blocks away startled them both. It came faintly, a confusion of shouts and cheers. Running feet padded by upon the road outside.

"Meggy! There has been fighting! Can you hear what they are saying?"

They could make out "Huzza!" many times repeated. MacDonald's name was shouted by someone, and then what sounded like Caswell's. But it was chiefly just noise. Tibbie came panting up the stairs with a candle. Her face was white and her eyes were enormous.

"They've won!" she gasped. "A laddie tell't me gae'in' by! They've won!"

"Who's won?" Meggy took the candle from her, wishing she could shake her into coherence.

"Mr. Davit's won!"

"The Patriots!" Mrs. Malcolm stretched out her hand and Meggy squeezed it convulsively. "What else did the lad say? Where was the battle? Were any of our men wounded—or killed?"

But Tibbie knew no more. The laddie had shouted and gone on.

"Hurry, Meggy, run out and learn what happened. Take Tibbie—or no, take Toney with you. It may be

a rough crowd. Just find out if we had many losses and come right back. Make haste, child."

Meggy ran for her cloak. The waning moon, looking as though somebody had sat on it and squashed it, shone through the trees. Toney had evidently already gone, for he made no answer to her calls. Once again she and Tibbie went running up the street together.

At the corner of Maiden Lane they met a little group coming away from the crowd; an old woman, crying, was being helped along by the strong arms of a younger one. Meggy stood aside to let them pass, looking at them pityingly. The younger woman turned to her.

"Shame on ye!" she said fiercely in a strong Scottish accent. "Shame on ye to be staring at anither's grief. Go along! Cry 'Huzza' for your fine militia!"

"I—I'm sorry! I didn't mean to stare——"

"A second Culloden!" quavered the old woman. "A second Culloden. Isna the heart tough that it winna break?"

The wind whipped along, rustling the dry bushes, blowing up stinging dust; it caught up a piece of paper and carried it into the air. The moonlight was white on the hard ground.

There was no chance of getting near to the man who had brought the news; the crowd was packed around him, shouting and huzza-ing, crying out threats and defiance to King George. The Loyalists were stealing

back to their houses. Meggy saw one frantic woman pulling on the sleeve of a burly man.

"Dae they ken aught o' Wullie MacLachlan?" she cried. "Dae they ken was Wullie MacLachlan hurtit?"

"They ain't brought back a list of killed and wounded," he answered roughly. "Thirty killed and more wounded, and eight hundred taken prisoners is all I know. No, I don't know nothin' about your Willie."

Thirty Highlanders killed, eight hundred taken prisoner! Meggy gasped. She started to ask the man more, but someone in the crowd bumped into her and when she recovered herself he was on the other side of the street.

"What of the Patriots?" she asked of a woman who stood near her. "Were their losses heavy?"

The woman turned, smiling radiantly. "None of our men were killed and only two were wounded—and they were from Duplin County. It was a great victory!"

"Where was the battle?"

"At Moore's Creek bridge, he said. Oh, I can scarce believe it!"

There was nothing more to be learned. Someone shouted an invitation to have a drink and there was a stampede into the tavern. The others began to drift away, talking excitedly. Meggy had the news she needed. She hurried back to Mrs. Malcolm. She found her sitting up, talking to Mrs. Porterfield, who had come in to tell her the good news.

"'Tis some o' me own good cartridges helped to win the day," said that cheerful Irishwoman. "Me poor Dinny is fit to be tied because we told him he was too young to go. He's out in the woodshed kicking the logs. His father wint and the older lads, and praise the Lord they're all of thim safe. Your own, too, Mrs. Malcolm. We've much to be thankful for this day. Well, I'll be lavin' ye now. Miss Meggy will be here with yez."

Meggy went downstairs with her and came back to hear what she had told Mrs. Malcolm.

"Meggy, did you hear? All of our lads are safe, save those two poor boys from Duplin County! Think of it! Raw troops meeting veterans, a smaller force against a larger one, and yet they won! They're brave lads and steady ones, and they're fighting for a cause that's worthy of them."

"I can't think what happened to the clansmen!" said Meggy miserably. "Oh, I'm glad our men won, but a Highland charge is a terrible thing—if they charged. Surely they did not run from the very beginning!"

"I think it must have been partly due to the artillery. Our men had their stand on the high ground across the creek, and they had cannon. It's a terrible thing, war. But since it had to come I cannot be too thankful that the first battle has turned out as it has. It will give our men heart to go on."

They talked till late. After she had finally settled Mrs.

Malcolm for the night, Meggy went to her room and, without undressing, sat down by the window and tried to think. She was glad—oh, truly she was glad—that the Patriots had won, but her heart was sore for her own people. They had gone forth so triumphantly. Why had they been so overwhelmingly defeated?

It must have been after two when Mrs. Malcolm called her. "Were you asleep, Meggy? Why, child, you haven't even undressed! I have been thinking, and it came to me that David and his father will be coming home soon, perhaps to-night. Couldn't we put a candle in the window for them? In the east window downstairs, toward the road."

Meggy went down and lit the candle. For a moment she stood there, cupping her hands over its little flame. There was no sound anywhere. What was Flora MacDonald thinking this night? Had the news reached her yet?

The candle made of the window a glass in which the dim room was reflected. Meggy saw herself in her gray gown, her soft hair tumbling on her shoulders. She sat down in the easy chair, kicked off her shoes and tucked her feet up under her. There, rolled up like a dormouse with her cheek almost touching her knee, she went to sleep.

She woke with a start. Someone was tapping on the windowpane. She straightened out her cramped limbs and sat up, tense, to listen. It came again, a light hasty

drumming of fingernails that stopped almost before it had begun. She looked toward the window where the candle, considerably diminished, still burned, and thought she saw a face pause a moment before it vanished.

Meggy did not know what to do. David or his father would not return that way, tapping at the pane, ducking out of sight. Summoning her courage, she went boldly to the window and looked out. The moon had set; the yard was dark. She thought she saw something stirring in the bushes by the door.

She stood a moment debating before she could bring herself to go to the door and open it. No one would have any reason to harm a household of women left alone; it must be someone needing help. She held the door open; the wind swept in and blew the candle flame into the sizzling wax. Again she heard the rustling in the bushes.

"Who are you?" she demanded sternly in a low voice, "and what do you want?"

A thin figure detached itself from the shadows and stumbled up the steps. "I saw your licht," a boy's voice said, "and I came in. I'm no drunk—ye needna be afeared. I'm weary and cauld and hungry, and I canna go farther."

She put out her hand and touched his shoulder. He was thin, and his voice sounded young. What harm could a forlorn Scots lad do them?

"Come in," she said, "and stand right there by the door till I look ye over."

She held the candle high. His face was black with powder and streaked with blood; his coat was slashed to the shoulder and fell away from his bare arm; a cut above his knees was bleeding. He braced himself against the door and threw back his head wearily so that the light fell full on his face.

"And what have you been doing to get yourself in such a plight?"

"I've come awa' frae the battle."

"The battle at Widow Moore's Creek bridge? You must have run far and fast to have come all the way by now. If all the Highlanders were as brave as you, 'tis small wonder they lost the day."

"They lost the day at Culloden, too," he answered with a gust of spirit, "but it was no' frae lack o' bravery. We fought like demons at Moore's Creek, but we hadna a chance. There was militia all around us, Caswell and Lillington ahead holding the bridge, swamps on both sides and no boats. There was naethin' tae do but tae go ahead. We swept down through the pines at dawn, pipes skirling, every lad his broadsword in his hand. 'King George and broadswords!' we shoutit. And a picked company o' seventy went ahead across the bridge. But the Rebels had taken the logs aff in the night and greased the sleepers. When our men rushed over, slipping and falling into the water, they

turned artillery fire on them. Try it yoursel' some time—crossin' a creek on a slippery log wi' bullets whizzin' around ye and men pressin' on ye frae behind, and a' goin' down into the water in a welter o' legs and arms and bluid. Do ye ken Far-Earst Campbell? He managed to get over—and he fell riddled wi' bullets as soon as his foot touched the ground. Then a company o' them forded the creek beyond and came through the swamp and cut in on our flank. What could we do? Thirty were dead and a deal more wounded. They had hundreds o' us prisoners, and the rest—ran awa'."

His hoarse voice was silent, out of sheer exhaustion. He swayed and would have fallen, if Meggy had not caught him and helped him into the big chair.

"I know who you are now," she said gently. "You're the wee lad at the end of the march-out who answered to 'A Gordon! A Gordon!'"

"Aye. I'm sma' credit tae the name. We broke up wagons and rode away three on a horse. I couldna go ony farther, sae the ither lads dropped me here and went on." He rubbed the sleeve that was whole across his eyes and made a little clean streak in the grime of his face.

Poor lad, he was over-young to fight. He looked as though he scarce had strength to lift a broadsword.

"Tell me one thing," said Meggy, "and I'll go find you something to eat. What of Kingsburgh and Captain MacLeod and Sandy MacDonald?"

"I know nothing about Captain MacLeod, or Sandy either. They got Kingsburgh. They're takin' the prisoners tae Halifax. They say now," he added bitterly, "that Sir Henry Clinton hasna even stairted tae leave Ireland. We wad ha'e been in worse case than we were, had we won through tae Wilmington!"

The waste of it! The tragic futility of that desperate courage in the winter dawn, the lives that had been lost—for nothing. A second Culloden, the old woman had said. But a second Culloden in point of bravery, too. Meggy could still be proud of her people, all the more proud of their courage, all the more tender toward their blind loyalty because she had given her allegiance to the other side.

She took the candle out into the kitchen and after rummaging in the food safe found some cold pork and a wedge of pie for the lad. She fed him, and he went to sleep in the big chair just as dawn was graying the windows. She put out the candle and was starting toward the stairs when she heard slow and careful steps coming down. Mrs. Malcolm in petticoat and shawl entered the room.

"I heard voices," she said, "I thought—— It's not my boys?"

In whispers Meggy told her of the lad and the battle as he had told it to her.

"Poor lad, poor lad! It might have been mine!"

Meggy tried to persuade her to sit down, but she de-

clared that she felt stronger. She wanted to see, she said, what kind of day it was going to be. They went and stood close together in the doorway, watching the sky turn pink in the east. A rooster crowed far away, a bird twittered sleepily near by.

"They may come to-day, Meggy. I suppose—in my heart I know—that it will be just for a little while and that they will have to march away again, for the struggle for freedom is only begun. But I am thankful that I have you here to wait with me—and David will be glad, too. My boy is fond of you, Meggy."

The sun came up over the trees; long pale shadows sprang across the frosted grass; the little cold daffodils bowed stiffly in the breeze. They stood there, shivering a little, and looked toward the road.

THE END